

Your New Reptile

– a guide to its care.

Reptiles are cold-blooded vertebrates such as lizards, snakes and tortoises. The term *cold-blooded* means they get their body temperature from the environment around them. We couldn't possibly teach you everything you specifically needed to know about reptile care on one care sheet so we've just covered the basic here with more information on our website.

Suggested Feeding Guidelines

Many lizards require live food, usually captive-bred insects like crickets or locusts. Snakes on the other hand are often fed with dead rodents. Tortoises and large herbivorous lizards require a varied diet of plant matter. Some reptiles are omnivorous and will eat both insects and plant matter. Most reptiles require a supply of water.

Housing

Reptile enclosures are more complicated and sturdy than small pet cages, since they not only need to protect the animals from escape and predators, but also provide them a controlled environment with the right heat and lighting. The concept of the *thermal gradient* is important. A thermal gradient means that the temperature is cooler at one end of the tank than the other allowing the reptile to control its body temperature by choosing a different location in the cage.

Ultraviolet lighting is also vital for reptiles, especially those lizards active during the daytime. It is important to get UV lighting that is designed specifically for reptiles. The type used to grow plants or illuminate fish is not suitable for reptiles. It is a good idea to keep both UV light and the main heat source on a timer/thermostat. This allows you to mimic the natural light and temperature changes associated with day and night.

"Cage furniture" should include a hollow log, piece of cork bark or purpose-built shelter for the reptile to conceal itself in. It is also important to enrich the reptile cage with items such as branches and rocks.

Cage location can be very important as well depending on the species. Snakes should normally never be handled less than a day after feeding as they may regurgitate. **Strict hand washing should be observed after handling these animals.**

When purchasing a reptile as a pet, it is essential to research the requirements of the species you are getting thoroughly before buying one.

The needs of different reptiles in terms of environment, temperature, humidity and feeding vary dramatically between species. Without the right environment and care reptiles will inevitably and quickly become ill and potentially die. So a thorough knowledge of the species is essential.

Because the care information for each species is so completely different we have produced a web page for each specific species. Please visit them and learn the basics in more detail. With each one we have included some additional reading. Please visit either www.parkvets.com or www.ruxley-manor.co.uk for further information.

Emergency Service

Parkvets has a vet on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In the event of an emergency, day or night, you should always telephone your usual Parkvets clinic and you will be given the appropriate information on what to do. Alternatively, call the emergency number 020 8300 8111

And Finally

We hope that you will have lots of fun and pleasure from your new pet over the coming years. We trust he or she will enjoy good health and hope we can help you to achieve this.

Should you need further advice about the health or welfare of your reptile then please contact us at the practice.

Special Offer for Ruxley Manor Garden Centre Customers

For your peace of mind Parkvets have teamed up with Ruxley Manor Garden Centre to offer you a 10% discount on your pet's first health check up. Visit our website at www.parkvets.com to find a Parkvets clinic near you.

You should obtain a voucher from Ruxley Manor Garden Centre and present it, plus your receipt, to Parkvets to claim your discount.



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