



THE CENTER FOR

BIRD & EXOTIC ANIMAL MEDICINE

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Maintaining a Healthy Herp Collection

All new animals should be quarantined upon arrival into your home or collection, no matter where you get them from. Quarantine allows you to monitor your new addition(s) for contagious diseases, in isolation, before they infect your entire collection.

What is quarantine?

Quarantine is a set period of time that an animal is completely isolated from others. The absolute minimum for any animal is 30 days; however, 3-6 months is highly recommended for reptiles. If you notice any signs of disease, the quarantine should continue longer.

Who should quarantine?

Anyone bringing a new animal into an area where animals are already being kept should quarantine. This includes hobbyist and large collections. Do NOT assume you are exempt just because you know the breeder, or you were promised a healthy animal.

Quarantines allow you to:

- Get to know your new reptile.
- Make sure they are eating, shedding, and eliminating normally.
- Learn the new reptile's behaviors.
- Establish if there are any underlying diseases before they spread.
- Allows the reptile to get used to its surroundings.

What do I do during quarantine?

- All animals in quarantine should be examined and tested by an experienced reptile veterinarian to look for basic diseases. This should be done at intake and at random times during their isolation.
 - This includes fecal testing and simple blood work. If disease is found, then treatment should be given, but only after diagnosis, as treatment without reason can lead to drug resistance.
 - Repeat testing should be done as some infections are not always found the first time through.
- Do not mix new and old animals. Handle old animals first, then new ones. Don't go back to the old ones, as you can transmit diseases this way.

- Optimally, do not handle new acquisitions and existing animals in the same day.
- Record keeping is a must.
 - Document all new arrivals and make sure you can identify each one individually.
 - Monitor their appetite, fecal production, weight, and activity.
 - Watch for any trends, which may help with earlier detection of disease.
- Maintain optimal hygiene.
 - Sanitation is extremely important to reduce the spread of disease. This includes washing your hands and changing clothes before and after handling existing animals.
 - Using foot baths to further reduce spread of disease.
 - Cleaning enclosures thoroughly and keeping cage furniture and bedding to a minimum.

There are many safe and effective disinfectants on the market now, but none will ever be 100% effective.

- To increase the effectiveness, cages and enclosures should be first cleaned with hot water and soap to remove any organic material (feces, urates, shed skin, old food, etc). Most disinfectants will not penetrate through this material.
- Once the cage is 'clean', then use an appropriate disinfectant and follow its directions.
 - Quaternary ammonium compounds (Roccal-D)
 - Sodium hypochlorite (bleach)
 - Ammonia
 - Inorganic iodine products (Povidone-iodine, Betadine)
- Make sure to rinse and/or allow to dry thoroughly before putting your animal back in.

What do you look for in your new quarantined animals?

- Weight loss
- Diarrhea (most reptiles should have formed stools)
- Decreased activity or weakness
- Any abnormal behavior
- Poor appetite
- Anything that leads you to feel something is not 'normal'.

In addition to following the guidelines for proper quarantine and keeping everything well sanitized, it is also important to remember that the number one problem seen in reptiles is related to poor husbandry and inappropriate temperature and lighting.

Do your research and give your new reptile the best chance possible.