

### The Importance of Quarantine

Quarantine is a period of observation for any signs of disease or infection of new animals before integration with the rest of the collection. In reptiles this can be challenging as some illnesses take weeks or even months before any clinical symptoms develop so it is very possible to introduce a sick reptile without seeing any external indicators of illness. Unfortunately, there can be asymptomatic carriers or prolonged incubation periods with some reptile illness so quarantine is not a complete guarantee, but it does reduce risk significantly to the rest of your reptiles.

### How to Quarantine

- Any new reptile should be quarantined upon arrival into your home, whether it's a different species, it came from a friend, a well-respected breeder, a pet store, an expo, or wild-caught.
- The quarantine area should be as far away from the rest of the collection as possible. If a separate building exists that is ideal, otherwise another room that is as far away from other reptiles can be used.
- The accepted duration for quarantine varies because it can take so long for some reptile illness to develop symptoms. **Major zoos quarantine new reptiles for a minimum of 90 days.** We recommend following this guideline, especially if the reptile came from a questionable source or a location where it may have been exposed to lots of other reptiles (an expo, pet store, etc). Some enthusiasts with valuable collections quarantine for 6 months or even a year.
- **Quarantined animals should have completely separate sets of tools and supplies that are never used on the rest of the collection.** There can be no sharing of water dishes, cage décor, substrate, feeding tongs, heating apparatus, thermometers, spray bottles, etc.
  - Quarantine cages should be easy to disinfect so use disposable items and minimal substrate (paper towels, newspaper, etc) so parasites and mites are easier to identify and treat.
  - Food and feeders used on quarantine animals should be discarded if uneaten, not offered to any other animals, even those also in quarantine.
  - Proper habitats with appropriate husbandry should be set up for each animal within these parameters even in the quarantine area.
- During quarantine, the reptile should be observed for any signs of illness which can include not eating, lethargy, mites, skin infections, respiratory symptoms (nasal discharge, swollen eyes, excessive saliva, coughing/sneezing/open mouth breathing/etc), weight loss, diarrhea, etc.
- **Always work with the established healthy collection first, including handling/feeding/cleaning, before dealing with any quarantine animals.**
  - Animals in quarantine should be handled as little as possible to reduce the risk of inadvertent contamination, ideally with disposable gloves.
  - The established collection should not be handled (or visited) again until you have showered and changed clothes.
- **If any new reptiles enter the quarantine area the clock starts over** as that new animal could expose an animal that is already partially into the quarantine period to a new illness.
  - For example, if a snake has been in quarantine for 60 days already and new reptile enters the same quarantine area at day 60 then they both should be considered to be at day 0.
- If any animal in quarantine shows signs of illness the clock should start over for any other animals in quarantine once that animal has been diagnosed and treated.
- Even if the animal has not shown signs of illness by the end of quarantine but it is not eating regularly it should remain in quarantine. For snakes they should eat at least 3-4 times in a row before considered out of quarantine.
- Regular weight checks and at least 2 fecal samples tested for parasites are recommended for all new reptiles. Viral screening should be considered for those that are particularly susceptible to certain viruses (Arenavirus in boas, Nidovirus in ball pythons, Cryptosporidium in leopard geckos, etc).

### Disinfection After Quarantine

Dispose or disinfect all cages, cage décor, bowls, feeding tongs, etc. from the quarantine area (keeping these items away from the collection or where you clean the healthy collection supplies). Chlorhexidine, F10SC, or diluted bleach (1/2 cup per gallon) are common disinfecting agents effective against most illnesses and parasites. 5% ammonia is most effective for Cryptosporidium or Coccidia. NEVER mix cleaning agents and make sure the enclosures and supplies are rinsed and air out completely before introducing reptiles.