

## **Tutorial: How to Ship Your Reptile or Amphibian!**



\* © TSK Supply.

One of the most commonly requested, or asked-about topics when it comes to keeping and breeding reptiles and amphibians, is the subject of shipping, or having to send them to an out of area or out of state buyer, customer, or other individual or organizational entity. While the majority of individual pet owners and reptile keepers or hobbyists need not worry about this aspect of reptile keeping, or having to ship their animals themselves, for others who are planning to, or have built up the reputation, business, and customer base as a more serious and dedicated breeder or hobbyist, having to ship animals may begin to become more of a necessity.

Shipping animals can always be stressful, or anxiety inducing, particularly when it may be one's first time doing so, or when one is new at doing so. There can be a lot that can happen, or that can go wrong if it is not precisely coordinated. Will your animal end up arriving at the correct address or location, or be "lost" in the mail? Did I securely house it so that it does not escape or get out? Will the animal be safe and comfortable during its journey to its new home? How do I know that I am going through the proper avenues for being able to ship a live animal?

Luckily, with a bit of planning, coordination, and experience, shipping animals can become more familiar and routine, and as long as one has all of the right materials to do so. In this educational tutorial, we will cover the basic ways of how to ship your reptile, amphibian, or invertebrate. There certainly can be many different materials and methods which can be utilized to ship your reptile, as well as other variables such as the number and/or size and/or ages of the animal(s) being shipped, the overall climate and weather conditions both the buyer and seller live in, and the species of animal being shipped. However, for the purposes of this tutorial, we will keep things simple and basic, and assume we will be shipping only one animal, and which can work and is for the most part, similar, for most groups of animals (i.e. snakes, lizards, turtles/tortoises, and other animals).

Without further a-due, here are the materials and methods one needs to know about shipping their reptile (or amphibian, or invertebrate)!

**Materials Needed:**

(1) Appropriately sized Cardboard box which can be taped or adequately sealed shut. Additional holes for ventilation can be made through the cardboard and Styrofoam as well. The shipping box can be pre-made, or be put together manually depending on one's preferences and what materials are available.



Conversely, a securely tied pillow-case or snake bag can be used to contain the animal in shipping, but generally provide less structural support than if an animal to be shipped is housed in a deli-cup or other sturdy container. Zip ties can also be used to secure the bag.

(1) Appropriately sized deli-cup or container lined with a suitable substrate. For amphibians, or other animals requiring more humid or moist conditions during shipping, this substrate can be dampened or wetted down prior to shipping. This container should also have adequate ventilation, and be large enough for the animal to at least be able to turn around within. Selecting an absorbent substrate for if the animal urinates or defecates during shipment is also recommended.



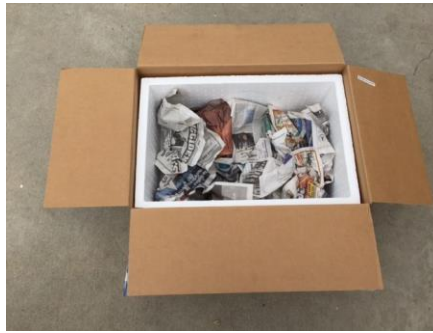
(1) Set of Styrofoam, or other similar insulation material to line each side and floor inside the cardboard box. This can be selected and cut to size within the box if need be, or a pre-insulated box can be used.



(1) Or More Heat Packs, depending on the size of the shipping box, and depending on weather and climate conditions of the buyer and seller. Be sure to select and use a heating pack which is safe and appropriate for use with reptiles or other animals, as not all of these maintain safe or constant temperatures for animals. Depending on the distance and duration of the distance needing to be shipped, 24 to 72 hour heating packs are available depending on one's needs or purposes. Heating or cooling packs can usually be placed at the top of the inside of the shipping container. Heating or cooling packs can usually be taped or placed at the top of the inside of the lid of the shipping container. Heating or cooling packs should also not be able to directly come into contact with the animal or its bag/container.



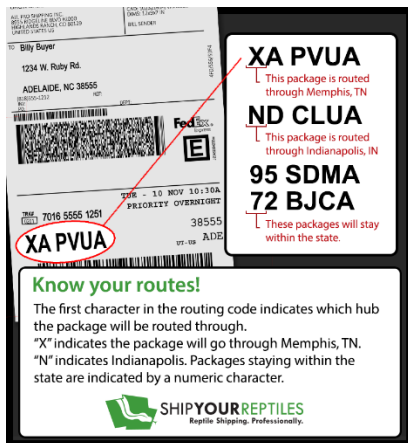
(1) Or More Cool Packs, depending on the size of the shipping box, and depending on weather and climate conditions of the buyer and seller. Be sure to select and use a cooling pack which is safe and appropriate for use with reptiles or other animals, as not all of these maintain safe or constant temperatures for animals. Depending on the distance and duration of the distance needing to be shipped, 24 to 72 hour cooling packs are available depending on one's needs or purposes. Heating or cooling packs can usually be taped or placed at the top of the inside of the lid of the shipping container. Heating or cooling packs should also not be able to directly come into contact with the animal or its bag/container.



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(1) Set of Used Newspaper, or other shipping paper material to be placed or filled inside the shipping container surrounding the animal's deli-cup or container. This paper will help maintain insulation, and also add stability and structure, and prevent the animal from being jostled around or otherwise unsecured during shipping.

(1) One roll of packing or other clear tape to seal the top of the box adequately.



\*Shipping Label. © ShipYourReptiles.com

(1) Shipping Label to be printed out, taped or attached to the top of the shipping box. This label should indicate the carrier being used or provided, the sender and recipient locations or addresses, the mode or priority of shipping selected, and other shipping details, services rendered, and receipt of information. Conversely, the label can be placed within a clear plastic sleeve and be taped or fastened onto the container that way. These shipping labels can be purchased through any major carrier's websites online, or through a carrier approved online shipping service.

### **Directions:**

**Step 1:** Assemble the box intended for shipping. There should usually be instructions on the box on how to do so. If the box is already pre-made, this step can be skipped.

**Step 2:** Cut the Styrofoam to size of all four corners, and floor and top on the inside of the box

and then insert them on the inside. Six pieces should be needed in total. If the box is pre-made, and the Styrofoam is already in place, this step can be skipped.

*Step 3:* Fill the inside of the container with the newspaper or shipping paper to roughly three-quarters of the way. This will act as additional security and insulation material.

*Step 4:* Insert the animal to be shipped in its bag or deli container into the newspaper or shipping paper. Make sure the container or bag fits snugly into place around all four sides, and is adequately suspended.

*Step 5:* If the ShipYourReptiles' recommended daytime high temperatures fall above, and within range for usage, add the cooling pack by taping the pack to the inner-top piece of Styrofoam insulation. Make sure the cooling pack is not in direct contact with the animal or the bag/container it is in. If recommended daytime high temperatures fall within suitable range, this step can be skipped.

*Step 6:* If the ShipYourReptiles' recommended daytime high temperatures fall below, and within range for usage, add the heating pack by taping the pack to the inner-top piece of Styrofoam insulation. Make sure the heating pack is not in direct contact with the animal or the bag/container it is in. If recommended daytime high temperatures fall within suitable range, this step can be skipped.

*Step 7:* Place the top Styrofoam piece into place, and then add any animal lists, packing lists, or other promotional or personal material to be included within. Then seal or tape the top flaps of the outer shipping box. Adding at least two to three layers of tape can help reinforce the box used.

*Step 8:* Print out and tape, or attach the Shipping Label to the top of the box. Don't worry about the form overlapping over sides of the box, as long as it is not covering or obscuring any other labels on the box.

*Step 9:* Using a printed label through a label maker, or handwritten, include "Live Harmless Reptile", or similar notice if not already indicated, as well as the other relevant information about the animal(s) within such as species (common and scientific names), sex, age, birth/hatch date, and other details.

***Congratulations! You are now ready to ship, or send off your reptile to its new home!***

***Other Tips and Information:***

-Always be sure that the shipping location for the animal to be shipped from is able to receive and ship live animals from that location, or call ahead whenever in doubt. Not all local post offices, postal carriers, or other mailing centers are able to accommodate or accept live animal shipments, or are designated shipping hubs for live animals. In most cases, one may want to choose to select "Priority" or "Overnight" shipping options for their live animals being shipped. Printed arrows to indicate the direction and orientation of the box facing upward are also often

useful.



-Federal laws and guidelines require that all harmless, and non-venomous reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates be marked or printed on the outside of the box with “Live Harmless Reptile”, “Live Non-Venomous Reptile”, or other disclaimers to the similar. Furthermore, noting the quantity or number of animals, their species (common and scientific names), sexes or sex ratios, age(s) or hatch/birth dates, and other relevant details about the animal(s) being shipped can also be highly useful information. These details of contents can be noted on the outside of the box and/or within the shipping container.

-It also never hurts to personalize a shipment as well by including one’s business cards, or any other notes or acknowledgements of business, transaction, or receipt of the animal once at its final intended destination. This is always a great touch in customer service.

-There are also several other third-party or “middle-man” services out there which make it much easier and more reassuring to ship one’s animal, and may often be able to provide and cover much of the shipping materials and expenses needed to do so for you. Some of these can include ShipYourReptiles.com and other similar businesses or services.

- Be sure everything written or printed on the box is neat and legible. Make sure that no other labels or components are covered up or obscured and overlapped by any other components needed for the outside of the box.

-Always be aware of, and follow all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations pertaining to the sales, possession, and shipping of live animals. Be aware that some species may be illegal to ship internationally or across state lines, or can have the potential to become invasive and injurious in some areas. Be aware of any legal protections a given species might have in both the sender’s and recipient’s state, as some species may be locally, state, and/or federally threatened, endangered, or otherwise protected. When in doubt, contact your state’s Department of Natural Resources, United States Department of Agriculture, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office.

<https://www.fws.gov/offices/>

<https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>

***Reptile and Amphibian Shipping Daytime Highs Temperature Guidelines (From ShipYourReptiles.com)***

**Below 38°F:** Don't ship. Wait for warmer weather.

**38-69°F:** Use a heat pack per our directions.

**70-91°F:** DO NOT use heat pack.

**92-100°F:** Ship to a "FedEx Ship Center" facility (NOT a FedEx Office, Pak Mail, Mail Boxes Etc. or other satellite/franchise location). Your shipment will arrive early in the morning and be kept inside until the recipient picks it up. [Search for a Fedex staffed facility near you](#). Read the IMPORTANT NOTE below.\*

**Over 100°F:** Don't ship. Wait for cooler weather.

Amphibians and other species from cooler moist climates.

**Below 38°F:** Don't ship. Wait for warmer weather.

**38-60°F:** Use a heat pack per our directions.

**60-80°F:** DO NOT use a heat pack. No cold pack required.

**80-92°F:** Use a cold pack per our directions.

**Over 92°F:** Don't ship. Wait for cooler weather.