

Are You Ready For a Reptile Show? Some Etiquette and Tips!

Reptile shows and expos can be great, interactive ways for being able to meet with, socialize, and hang out with other reptile enthusiasts and breeders of all levels of knowledge, experience, and background, and are often also great ways of being able to find animals which are rarely seen, or are at least not commonly available through other means such as many pet stores. They are also often great sources for purchasing many of your reptile and amphibian related food, caging, and other supply needs at less than retail prices! Some of the largest reptile expos in the United States, which include the North American Reptile Breeder's Conference, or NARBC, National Reptile Breeder's Expo, and Reptile Super Show in Ponomo, CA are among the largest expos in the U.S., attracting vendors and attendees alike from throughout the country and even the world, while there are also many, smaller and more local shows which occur in most areas. Some are strictly captive born animal only, while others may be more lenient on allowing wild-caught or imported animals. Some are strictly reptile and amphibian shows, while others may consist of other sectors of the pet industry as well such as bird, fish and aquatic, small mammal, or may even be considered "all animal expos" with the widest diversity of different animals available. Some yet may also have a strong educational and outreach component to them as well, and may include lectures, seminars, and strongly encourage education, while others may simply be more sales and industry based.

But what if this is your first time to a reptile show or expo, or you're not quite familiar with what sorts of events these are? What should you do and/or expect before, during, and after going to these events, and how may they be similar and different from other animal related events you may have been to before? Well, you're in luck! Some expos and shows may also be advertised more widely and heavily than others, and may have differing admission rates and show incentives such as raffles, prizes, and giveaways, all depending on the event promoters and organizers, although most, if not all are open to the public, including children, parents, and families alike! After a while, you may even come to pick up on the show culture which can oftentimes vary among the many different shows throughout the country! No matter the sort of expos which one may go to, here is our newly created guide all about attending a reptile show or expo, and some of the rules, etiquette, and do's and don'ts which we hope make your first few reptile show experiences the most positive, productive, and educational experiences they can be!

Plan Ahead and Pack Accordingly

Planning ahead and packing accordingly are some of the biggest considerations to keep in mind before attending a reptile show! Plan when, or what time of day you'd like to go! If you are searching for specific animals, or the best animals at the show, going in the morning right at opening time may be your best bet. Many shows also provide all access, before show, or VIP tickets or passes for before the show, although these will be much more pricey. Conversely, if you are looking to just avoid the crowd, and see some unique animals, with nothing particular in mind, or are interested in the best deals at the show, going in the afternoon, or towards the end

of the show may be your best bet! One may also want to bring extra bags, containers, or other carrying devices for during the show, as these may oftentimes not be provided. Also be sure to **BRING EXTRA CASH** to these events! Methods of payment for animals and supplies usually depend on the vendor, although, cash, check, or credit card may be accepted. ATM machines are also available at, or nearby many reptile shows and expos, but it is also not uncommon for them to run out during the show as well, so come prepared! It is also often a good idea to buy anything you need at the show early (such as feeders, supplies, etc.) before it runs out during the day.

Leave Your Animals At Home

Typically, unless you are a vendor or exhibitor at the show, leaving your personal pets or other animals at home may be the best bet. While some shows may be more lenient than others on allowing attendees to bring their pets, there are still many reasons not to, which may include preventing the spread of parasites, viruses, and other diseases from animal to animal at a jam packed show or event, and other similar biosecurity procedures. Similarly, animals can become stressed and react defensively, which may not produce good results for people or the animals in a large crowd of people. As always, it is also always best practice to wash, or sanitize one's hands, before, after, and between touching or handling any animals from exhibitor to exhibitor at the show, as you might not know where one issue may be picked up to another.

Know How to Approach and Talk to the Vendors

Most vendors and exhibitors at reptile expos and shows are there to sell the animals they produce while educating prospective buyers on properly caring for their new pet. Some may also be local or area reptile and amphibian specialty stores, reptile rescue organizations, herpetological societies, or other organizations or businesses. Asking to touch, or handle an animal never hurts, and many may allow one to do so, or allow one to do so if they are planning on making a serious purchase, but don't take it personally if a vendor does not, as they are likely only trying to look out for the health and well-being of their animals. Keep in mind that these events are different from a petting zoo. Likewise, it never hurts to ask to take any photos or video out of courtesy, although the majority of vendors typically will not mind you doing so. Finally, many vendors will not mind if one does some negotiating, especially during the end of the show, but don't lowball them. They have likely put in a lot of time, effort, and hard work into the animals they keep and sell. Also, while reptile shows can be family fun and friendly events, be aware of traffic flow at the show in general, and try not to impede access to the vendor's tables and/or around the show, and also be sure to supervise any kids with you as well. Finally, most vendors and exhibitors at the show will have their own business cards or can provide their contact information. Feel free to do so in order to stay in touch and follow up with them later!

For Vendors as Well!

If you are a vendor or exhibitor at a reptile show or expo, there are also a few things to keep in mind as well! Be polite, friendly, and approachable with the show's attendees. Impressions such as this are one of the biggest things to keep in mind in order to have buyers and attendees alike keep coming back to you! Also put forth your best effort in presenting your table or other space at the event! Spruce it up with nice table cloths, contact cards and professional displays, care sheets, FAQs, and other informational brochures and handouts, and great looking signs, banners, or other logos. Attendees will notice this effort, and be impressed by it! Also be aware

of who you may be talking to or educating during the show. While many people may indeed be other reptile breeders and enthusiasts, many others might not be, and many may also be kids, parents, families, or beginners with just one or two reptiles at home. Realize that what may work or be appropriate for a breeder might not be for someone looking for just their first animal, and even just asking “is this your first reptile” can help ascertain this. This is important in helping to bridge the disconnect down the line between keeping these amazing animals in captivity and ultimately understanding their natural history we can base our husbandry information on in the wild., And as always, be sure to take the time to properly screen and educate any prospective buyers rather than just pushing someone to buy an animal.

Do Your Research and Don't Impulse Buy

Don't be afraid to ask questions and learn! But also still do your research and homework into the species you are potentially interested in beforehand, or at least be already familiar with its care requirements, and don't buy an animal just because it looks cool, is cute/pretty, your child wants it, or is cheap or a good deal. Not all animals make for the best beginner's pets, and most reptiles and amphibians will be a long term commitment. Oftentimes, books, informational brochures and care sheets, business cards, and local reptile education and herpetological societies are on hand at many expos and shows are some of the resources available to help answer your questions and concerns and make the best decisions about which animals and supplies to select. Likewise realize, that while these expos can oftentimes be great educational experiences, purchasing an animal at an expo is ultimately the buyer's responsibility. While many vendors and exhibitors will typically be more than happy to help you and answer questions, also be respectful of their time as well, particular at the show's busy times or peaks.

Always Know Your Local, State, and Federal Laws and Regulations

Many states govern and regulate the sale and ownership of their native species of amphibians and reptiles, which are typically designed to help protect and conserve native, wild populations. Likewise, some animals may not be legal in all states, municipalities, or other areas for other reasons, or may be regulated in some fashion. Know and understand all of your local and state laws, including what may be native to your state (if travelling from out of state) and whether the animal you are interested in is legal in your state or area.

Inspect and Make Considerations for Your New Animal

Once you have found and purchased that new animal you have always wanted, be sure to thoroughly inspect the animal for any visual external parasites, sores/injuries, signs of illness, or other defects. Much more detailed criteria for helping you select and examine the healthiest and most well established animal possible are available in another article on the MAHS website. Although the vast majority of vendors will provide transport enclosures or containers in which the animals were displayed in temporarily for purposes of the show (also understand that these are not the animal's permanent form of housing), bringing extra bags or containers for your new animal never hurts in case the vendor does not provide it. Also plan to have your new animal's enclosure or setup ready and functioning for when you arrive back home whenever possible, to ensure the most optimal comfort and safety of your new animal. And once your new animal is home, allow it to settle in and acclimate to its new environment, and **QUARANTINE**, especially if you already have other, existing animals at home! More information and resources

on the best ways of, and duration of how long you should do this, are also available in other articles on the MAHS website. Also consider any other stops or destinations one has to make after the show if you have new animals! Leaving them outside or in a vehicle during too cold or hot of temperatures can quickly kill them! Instead, head straight home with your new animals, or if one must make other stops along the way, bring the animals in with you as discreetly as possible, or if possible in a nontransparent bag or other container. And finally, while it can often be tempting to either take out and play with your new animal right away, or haul them around, keep in mind they are still living, breathing animals, after all!