

What to Do with Your New Reptile (or Amphibian)

Purchasing, adopting, or acquiring a new animal, whether it be a reptile, amphibian, or invertebrate is always a new and exciting experience, as we all hope and look forward to the new challenges and responsibilities surrounding that animal. We obviously want to be able to do right by that animal while also wanting to make it a positive experience. As a result, we understand that it can oftentimes be extremely tempting to want to take out, handle, or “play with” your new animal immediately after you bring it home.

Whether that animal is one’s first animal, or one has or already keeps current animals, there are also several important considerations and common issues which can arise to keep in mind and understand when you have your new animal. This article will include all of the most common and important considerations and common issues to keep in mind following those times from when one brings their new animal home and allowing it to adjust and acclimate.

- 1.** No matter where you have acquired your new reptile or amphibian, be it from a local pet store, show or expo, rescue organization, or even online and shipped, one important first step to consider is **allowing that animal to adjust to its current room temperatures** before immediately placing it into either its quarantine or permanent enclosure.
- 2.** This is especially a factor to consider if the animal had been shipped, and therefore may have been more likely to have been exposed to prolonged weather and temperature conditions outside. Placing an animal immediately into its enclosure may create a shock to the animal, potentially leading to stress, or in some extreme, worst case scenarios, even end up in death of the animal (depending on its overall health and condition, of course).
- 3. Inspecting your new animal again**, particularly if the animal had been shipped, and where opportunity for an initial inspection might not have been possible, for overall health and external condition certainly never hurts!
- 4.** While this topic is previously covered in much greater depth and detail in our “Health Checklist for Reptiles, Amphibians, and Invertebrates”, performing a second or even third subsequent inspection could identify potential additional issues which might have been missed initially, and also helps prevent or stem any further potential issues later once your animal is ready to be introduced to its enclosure.
- 5. Allow time for your animal to adjust and acclimate to its new enclosure or environment and have reasonable expectations.** We understand that this can oftentimes be the most challenging aspect of what to do with your new animal. However, immediately taking it out, handling, or playing with it can cause stress to your new animal, and thus lead to potentially disappointing outcomes of the animal not wanting to eat right away.
- 6. Very strongly consider quarantining your new animal.** Quarantining is the overall process of housing

and maintaining an animal separately, or segregated away from any others, particularly when it comes to newly acquired animals. This is most often recommended in order to monitor for, treat, if necessary, and limit or prevent the spread of potential snake mites or other parasites, bacterial, viral, or fungal infections, or other potential and contagious (to other animals) diseases, illnesses, or health issues. If your new animal happens to be a first, or only in your household, this is usually not as large of an issue, but certainly becomes much more so when there becomes multiple or subsequent animals, or collections of animals thereof. Quarantine enclosure setups should be maintained relatively sparse and simple in order for best results in monitoring for, treating, and addressing any potential health issues your new animal may have early on. More information, techniques, and procedures for quarantining can be found in our “The Importance of Quarantine” educational article.

7. This of course depends on each individual animal, as some might adapt without further issue and eat right away, while others may require more time and patience. Each animal should at least, however, be given the opportunity to acclimate, should they need it. Generally, in most cases, allow for at least a week or so for your new animal to settle in before handling it often. If any problems or concerns persist, then any issues may be further diagnosed and addressed. Overall, having the right expectations initially while being patient with your new animal can avoid panic and worry later.