



# Quarantine Practices for Reptile Collections

## Introduction

The aim of quarantine is to reduce the risk of disease transmission from newly acquired animals to existing collections. Many reptile diseases can infect an individual without initially causing obvious signs of illness. Examples include fatal viral diseases as well as bacterial infections. Closed collections in which no new animals are ever introduced are ideal but often impractical. Open collections allow for new genetic material and even new species to be added to the collection, but do carry the risk of disease spread.

*Listed below are some important quarantine practices that can help prevent the introduction of disease.*

### 1. Choosing a quarantine area

- Off site: A location that is physically separate to the existing collection. Some people choose this location at a friend or relative's house. There must be NO other reptiles at this location and the area must be easy to keep strictly isolated (see Point 2).
- On site: A room as far from the existing collection as possible. This room should be able to be completely isolated (see Point 2).

### 2. Keeping the quarantine area ISOLATED!

- Ensure that the area is not used for any other purposes. If the area is in use then there will be an increased amount of human traffic to and from the area. Every time a person enters the quarantine area they can potentially bring a disease in or out!
- Make all people in the house aware that the area is restricted access and to only enter when required.
- Keep the area locked.
- If possible, this room should have a separate ventilation system to the original collection.
- It may seem entertaining to invite friends or breeders over to see your collections but by doing so the risk of spreading diseases increases.
- Equipment used to house, clean, feed and handle quarantined reptiles must be dedicated to this area.
- Disinfectant foot baths (used on entering and exiting the area) and protective clothing such as gloves and coats should be considered.
- Make sure the existing collection is tended to before the quarantine collection. Showering and disinfecting between quarantined and existing animals is advisable.
- If visiting other reptile keepers ensure strict hygiene measures are followed such as showering and spraying with disinfectant afterwards before handling your own collections.

### 3. Housing reptiles within the quarantine area

- When purchasing reptile from other sources you should quarantine each group separately. Mixing groups from different sources defeats the purpose of quarantine.
- If a separate room is not possible, ensure that different groups are housed in different locations within the room. This is much less ideal.

- House all animals separately. This has benefits that include easy record keeping and the ability to manage disease in the event of disease outbreaks.
- Treat each individual as if it is quarantined from the others. Use disinfectant hand wash, such as F10, between animals after cleaning, feeding and handling.

### 4. Quarantine room equipment

- Make a list of all the equipment you will need for the quarantine room. This includes enclosures, thermometers, thermostats, bowls, tongs and even a rubbish bin. Gather all equipment and dedicate it to the quarantine room. These items should never leave this room and risk coming in contact with your collections. Make sure equipment is labeled so it stays there!
- Use very simple enclosures. Remove any unnecessary furnishing including branches (other than plastic dowelling), rocks and logs. A standard quarantine enclosure will consist only of newspaper/paper towel substrate, a hide box and a water bowl.
- If possible dedicate a hide box and water bowl to each enclosure. Make certain they are either disposable or able to be disinfected.

### 5. Disinfectants

- There are many disinfectants on the market but for reptile collections we recommend F10Sc. It is capable of killing bacteria, fungi and most viruses.
- Have a number of spray bottles containing disinfectant within the quarantine room and the existing collection.
- Remember that disinfectants will not work when there is organic matter (faeces, urates, food) present. This needs to be cleaned away before using any disinfectant.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for use.

### 6. Time in quarantine

- Currently a quarantine period of 90 days is recommended, although 6-12 months is more ideal. The long incubation period of some viral diseases make a long quarantine period more appropriate.

