



# AVIAN REPTILE & EXOTIC PET HOSPITAL REPTILES - CHOOSING THE RIGHT ONE FOR YOU

## INTRODUCTION

Although reptiles are promoted as low maintenance pets, they still require attention every day. Do your homework and research what is involved in caring for a reptile including the habits and behaviour of different species, housing, heating, humidity, lighting, cleaning, feeding and any other relevant husbandry information before selecting the species that you want to keep.

## LICENSEING

Contact The Department of Environment and Climate Change (NPWS Wildlife Licensing Section) to obtain the correct license that is required to own a reptile. Check the internet at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wildlifelicences](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wildlifelicences).

## PURCHASING

Buy a reptile from a reputable source. Look around before you buy.

Only buy reptiles that have been born in captivity.

Until you are experienced do not buy very young reptiles – they are very delicate and difficult to care for.

Once you have the enclosure right and have owned reptiles for a few years, then you can consider buying young animals.

Choose a reptile that is active and alert.

Choose reptiles that are eating. Do not buy the smallest reptile in the group – it is already showing signs of problems that you will see later down the tract.

Ensure you obtain the correct information on how to care for the reptile.

## VET CHECK

Once you buy a reptile, a post purchase examination by your veterinarian is recommended – as well as yearly check ups.

At a post purchase examination the reptile can be checked for gender, parasites in the faeces as well as discussions with the vet on husbandry and feeding issues and other problems.

During a yearly check up, the veterinarian will discuss any husbandry problems, weigh the reptile, evaluate the faeces and investigate any other problems.

## DISEASE TRANSMISSION PREVENTION

To prevent diseases being transmitted to people;

Always wash your hands after handling reptiles – do not kiss them. Wear gloves when cleaning the cage.

Clean the cage with a suitable disinfectant.

Prepare and wash food item and containers away from the kitchen.

Also see the 'Quarantine your Reptile' fact sheet as well.



Central Bearded Dragon  
(*Pogona vitticeps*)

Carpet Python  
(*Morelia spilota variegata*)



Central Bearded Dragon  
(*Pogona vitticeps*)

## HUSBANDRY

Husbandry for reptiles can be complex and it can be different for each species. Make sure you investigate fully and provide the following aspects for each different species. Some of the things to consider are;

**Temperature** – make sure you have a full gradient range of temperatures in the enclosure from maximum hot spots to cooler areas. Research the maximum hot spot temperature for your species and make sure it is at that level with a quality thermometer – don't guess! Be sure the animal cannot burn themselves on the heating systems.

**Humidity** – make sure you provide the correct humidity through spray bottles, water bowls etc. Once again measure with a Hygrometer don't guess.

**Lighting** – speak to the experts to find out the correct lighting types and regimes both on the tank and spending time in sunlight. Remember that the proper effects (UV, Vit D etc) from light bulbs can wear down as the bulbs age and stop being efficient long before the bulbs stop working. Check them and replace regularly (usually yearly).

**Feeding** – feed only good quality foods to your reptile. Check what supplements maybe necessary for your pets food. Keep records of feeding types and dates.

**Cleaning** – research the best cleaning regime for your species and stick to it. Be sure not to contaminate other cages or yourself with left over foods, faeces etc. Use quality reptile specific disinfectants.

**Housing** – make sure the housing you provide is suitable for your species, remember they may still be growing in size. Check that it can maintain the temperatures needed and does not loose heat easily particularly during winter. Provide suitable cage furniture (substrate, rocks, branches, plants waterbowls etc). Make sure there is no way the animal can harm themselves (eg can't get stuck in their water bowl. Can't swallow the gravel, can't easily fall off a branch or rock ledge or burn themselves on heating systems).

## STARTING OUT

Different reptile species have different temperaments. Discuss your requirements with breeders to get an idea of the different species temperaments.

Some of the better reptiles for beginners are Blue-tongue and Shingleback Lizards, and Diamond, Carpet and Children's Pythons.

Ideally, handle a reptile of the species you intend to purchase first to get an idea.

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