

## The Responsible Reptile Owner

Many people think reptiles are cheap pets, easily accessible and easy to care for. However, after purchasing or being given a reptile several things can happen.

1. The reptile becomes ill and/or dies because of improper care.
2. The person becomes bored with their pet and leaves it unattended or lets it go in an unsatisfactory environment.
3. The cost of the reptile becomes overwhelming.
4. The responsible owner enjoys the companionship of the pet for life.

A reptile in captivity depends on its owner completely. While it may have defenses, it is still basically defenseless. Unable to care for itself, it is at the mercy of the caregiver and every element of its care is important.

To neglect responsibility as an owner can mean torture for the reptile. If you think it shouldn't matter because a reptile is incapable of emotion, maybe you should refrain from acquiring any pet. Whether or not it does or does not show or experience emotion is irrelevant. There is still the element of pain and suffering to be considered should it be neglected.

Any living being deserves to obtain adequate care, especially one held in captivity. A reptile that has been provided for may not know how to adequately care for itself once it is put back into the wild. Maybe the reptile is released in an environment that lacks the right food sources or temperature. Protection from predators may be inadequate.

If you give your pet away or sell it, please make sure the person receiving the reptile has proper knowledge of what it takes to care for and shelter the animal.

If you decide to own a reptile for a pet and don't practice the proper handling, you could be attacked. Who would be to blame? You.

Reptiles can be interesting as pets. The experience can be rewarding and educational. The responsibility lies in the hands of the owner. If you want a fulfilling and long lasting experience as a reptile owner, take the time and make the effort to learn about what's involved before you purchase or accept a reptile.

If you choose a pet shop, choose a reputable pet shop. Don't count on their expertise. Some pets unfortunately are sold merely as profit pieces. It's often a wonder they even made it to the pet shop in one piece and alive. Exotic pet sales have gone through the roof, so many of these wonderful creatures are handled wrong right from the start. It pays to research how a healthy reptile should look before you make the commitment to purchase. Just having a license to sell a reptile does not make the management responsible people with consciences.

A responsible pet owner is not just someone who loves animals. It's someone who makes the effort to care for the animals properly. There are many well-meaning people who call themselves animal lovers and still don't have what it takes to be the right caregiver for reptiles. You may be the perfect match for a dog and far from the perfect match for a turtle or a lizard! Know your limits before you commit.