

## Reptile Quarantine. The when, the why and the how.

With all the talk about infectious disease and the practice of self-isolation that is happening across the globe, we thought that it would be a good time to discuss the importance of reptile quarantine and the importance of it. **What is it, why do it and how is it achieved?**



### When and why should you quarantine reptiles?

Anytime a new reptile is introduced into your home or collection, it is important that you quarantine it prior to introducing it into their new environment. This will allow you to identify if the reptile has any notable health issues from its previous home. In the event that your reptile unwell or is undergoing treatment for a health concern, quarantine is essential to prevent the spread of disease.

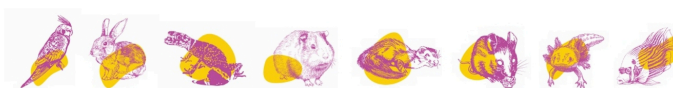
### What is quarantine?

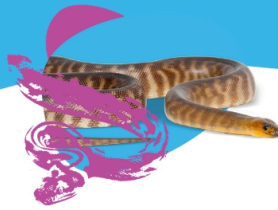
Whether it is a group of snakes or a group of people, the concept of quarantine is the same. The goal is to separate and stop the movement of individuals that have been exposed to or may have potentially been exposed to pathogens, to see if they become sick before they are mixed with the general population. This means that once an animal or group of animals is quarantined, no new animals should be added to that area.

### How do you set up a quarantine area?

The most effective way to set up a quarantine area is to keep the individual(s) concerned in a completely different location. This means having a separate facility off-site, with no other reptiles around. Anyone entering the area should not have had prior contact with any other reptiles in recent times. All clothes and materials should be kept on-site and not used for any other purpose aside from managing the individual(s) in quarantine. Protective clothing should be worn, and disinfectant foot baths are recommended on entry and exit.

This may seem a little daunting to private keepers with limited resources. If a separate facility is not available, an area as far as possible from the main collection is recommended. The same guidelines used for an off-site facility should be adhered to. However, in addition it is advisable to have separate ventilation to minimise the risk of spreading airborne and aerosolised infectious diseases. If other animals require attending to, this should be done prior to having anything to do with the quarantined animals. Proper precautions such as showering and changing clothes should also be considered.





## How should I equip my quarantine area?

The quarantine room should be kept as simple as possible. Use enclosures that are simple to clean and which have minimal fomites. A fomite is any object that can be contaminated and potentially aid in the spread of infection. Similarly, furniture in the room should be kept to a minimum and floors and walls should also be easy to clean. Have a complete additional set of utensils for cleaning, feeding and medicating each individual. Where possible, use items that are disposable (i.e. hides, feed bowls, water bowls). Non-porous materials such as those made from plastic are ideal as they are easier to clean and disinfect if they become soiled with faeces or urates.

A disinfectant that works on all manner of infectious organisms is recommended. The choice should be based on the efficacy, ease of use and safety profile. F10 and other products are currently used in our practice due to the ability to disinfect against the majority of viruses, fungi, bacteria and some protozoa commonly encountered in reptile veterinary practices but not all treatments cover all infectious organisms it is best to discuss with your veterinarian.

It is important to thoroughly clean an area prior to using disinfectant, as organic material such as, faeces, urates and foodstuffs renders them ineffective. Regardless of the type of disinfectant used, read all labels carefully for safety and usage instructions to ensure it is applied properly, at the correct concentration and for the correct amount of time.

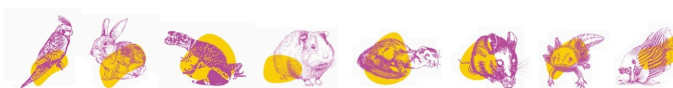
## How long should I quarantine my reptile?

This is a question we are often asked and the answer for this can vary depending on the reason for quarantine. Some infectious diseases can go for long periods of time without showing clinical signs. For some conditions, such as mites, a quarantine period of 90 days will be sufficient to allow the keeper to observe for signs of infestation before introducing the reptile into the general population.



Unfortunately, there are some viruses that can take years to cause visible illness. For example, there are cases of [Sunshine virus](#) and [Bornavirus](#) in snakes and cases of agamid adenovirus in some lizards, where individuals have been testing positive for years without showing any signs of disease. This means that they can be spreading disease for prolonged periods without showing any effects. Therefore, it may be beneficial to have testing performed on certain individuals prior to them leaving a quarantine situation.

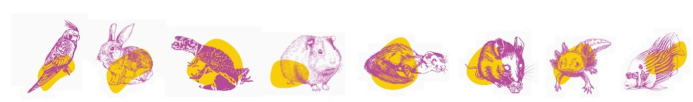
With this in mind, strict quarantine procedure should be adhered to for all individuals entering a collection, and consideration as to how this will be achieved should be made





prior to acquiring any new animals. It is important for you the reptile keepers to stay up to date on the current recommended quarantine periods and discuss the infectious diseases that pose a threat to your animals with your reptile veterinarian.

To learn more about the importance of quarantining your reptile, [get in touch!](#)



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