

Handling Reptiles

Handling Reptiles: The Right Way to Connect with Your Scaly Friend

So, you've decided to welcome a reptile into your home—how exciting! But let's get one thing straight: just like any other pet, your new scaly buddy isn't going to jump into your arms right away. Handling reptiles can be a little tricky at first, but with patience and understanding, you can create a bond with your cold-blooded companion.

Socialising Your Reptile: A Gradual Approach

Many folks believe that reptiles can't be handled, but that's a myth! Most reptiles can actually be socialised over time. The key is to give them a chance to settle into their new environment before you start picking them up. It's best to wait at least a week before attempting any handling. During this time, hang around their vivarium so they can get used to your presence. Just be mindful not to invade their space too much!

Once your reptile has acclimated, you can begin interacting with them. Gently place your hand in the vivarium, allowing them to approach you at their own pace. Remember, they should always have the option to retreat if they feel uncomfortable. Start with short handling sessions to help them adjust, and gradually extend the time you spend with them.



Handy Tips for Safe Reptile Handling

1. **Choose Captive-Bred Reptiles:** When looking for a reptile, opt for one that's been captive-bred. These critters are generally more accustomed to human interaction and are less likely to carry parasites.
2. **Wash Your Hands Before and After:** Keeping your hands clean is super important! Not only does it help prevent the spread of diseases between reptiles, but it also reduces the risk of bites. Reptiles have highly developed

sensory organs, and if they catch a whiff of something tasty on your fingers, they might think it's snack time!

3. **Establish Communication:** Reptiles may strike out for a couple of reasons: they could see you as food, or they might feel threatened. To let your reptile know you're not there to feed them, try using a non-food item (like a stick) to gently touch their nose. You can also use tools like a snake hook to pick them up without stress.

4. **Mind Their Temperature:** Being cold-blooded means reptiles rely on their environment to regulate their body temperature. Try to limit handling sessions to around 30 minutes, especially in cooler months when they might need to stay cozy in their vivarium.

5. **Be Gentle:** When you're handling your reptile, move slowly and calmly to avoid startling them. Always support their weight, so they feel secure in your hands.

6. **Stroke from Head to Tail:** When petting your reptile, stroke them from head to tail. This is not only more comforting for them but also helps protect



their delicate scales.

Best Reptiles for Handling

If you're looking for reptiles that are known for being more docile and friendly, here are a few great options:

- **Geckos:** These little guys can be very social and often enjoy being handled.
- **Bearded Dragons:** Known for their friendly nature, bearded dragons often thrive on interaction.
- **Slider Turtles:** They can be quite tolerant of handling, especially if they're socialised from a young age.

- **Ball Pythons:** Generally calm and friendly, these snakes are popular choices for handling.

Of course, remember that every reptile is an individual. Factors like health, hunger, shedding, or even their mood can influence their willingness to be handled.

Final Thoughts

Handling your reptile can be a rewarding experience, but it's essential to approach it with patience and care. Each reptile has its own personality, and by building trust and



understanding, you can enjoy a wonderful bond with your scaly companion.