Basic Reptile Care

* Reptiles cannot regulate their own body temperatures.
* Reptiles cannot produce calcium or Vitamin D3.
* Reptiles cannot sense heat through their bellies.
* Reptiles do not “know” what they need to eat.
* Reptiles will not always soak when dehydrated.

What Does This Mean For Us?

1. Basking Area/Heat:

Reptile cages must have a temperature gradient with a hot basking spot and a cool retreat side. This heat must come mostly from above (heat lamp, ceramic heat emitter, etc) because the reptile will not move off of heat rocks or heat pads even if it becomes too hot.

2. UVB lighting:

We must provide UVB lighting and calcium supplementation so that the reptile can survive; even nocturnal reptiles require UVB lighting. They must have UVB lighting in order to produce vitamin D3, which is what allows them to absorb the calcium we feed them. Without UVB lighting, we can put as much calcium on their food as we want and they will not absorb any of it. Also, UVB lights must be changed every 6 months for strip fluorescents and every 12 months for compact fluorescents. The bulb may not be burned out but the UV output has dropped too low to help the reptile.

3. Diet:

Reptiles will eat things that are not good for them. We must know what is healthy for our pets to eat and the correct quantities.

4. Hydration:

You may need to mist or soak your reptile depending on its needs. Remember, just having a large water bowl is no guarantee of hydration.