What is a reptile?
Reptiles include a wide variety of animals such as turtles, snakes, and lizards. Reptiles can be very large (such as crocodiles) or very small (such as a gecko). Reptiles are poikilothermic (cold blooded) which means they can not regulate their own body temperature and must rely on environmental temperature to control body temperature.

Are reptiles hard to keep?
Keeping any pet is a big responsibility. Reptiles require very specific husbandry (care, food, shelter). The key to keeping your reptile healthy is to provide an environment close to that species’ natural environment, including temperature range, humidity level, light cycle, and landscape. Proper nutrition is also essential. The resources on this handout can be used as a starting guide. Your Banfield team is your best resource if you have questions about your reptile. The majority of reptile health concerns can be avoided by having the proper enclosure, diet and ensuring the reptile’s environment is clean.

How do I choose a healthy reptile that will be a good fit for my family?
Do research in advance and buy from a reputable source, such as PetSmart®, a well-established breeder or a reptile specialty shop. Talk with your Banfield doctor about your family’s lifestyle and what reptiles might be a good fit for you. Talk with friends and family members about pet reptiles they’ve encountered and the husbandry that’s needed. Key things to keep in mind are:

- **Life span**: Tortoises can live for more than 20 years.
- **Temperament**: Some reptiles enjoy being handled and will respond to their pet parents, while others don’t like being handled.
- **Final size**: This is especially important with snakes who can quickly outgrow their homes.
- **Diet**: All reptiles require a specific, yet diverse diet. Some are carnivorous. They eat things like crickets, mice or fish. If you’re squeamish, a carnivorous reptile may not be the best pet for you.
- **Enclosures**: Enclosures need to be outfitted with the proper heating/humidity zones. It can be very expensive to properly house a reptile and provide the correct light, heat, humidity and diet.
- **Your home**: Some rentals do not allow reptiles. Do your research.
Responsible Reptile Selection and Husbandry  
continued...

Environmental Guidelines for Common Reptile Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Optimal Temperature</th>
<th>Humidity Level</th>
<th>Natural Habitat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Iguana</td>
<td>88°F – 98°F (31°C – 37°C)</td>
<td>50% – 70%</td>
<td>Tropical rain forest, arboreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bearded Dragon</td>
<td>85°F – 95°F (29°C – 35°C)</td>
<td>10% – 20%</td>
<td>Arid, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopard Gecko</td>
<td>85°F – 95°F (29°C – 35°C)</td>
<td>10% – 20%</td>
<td>Arid, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Snake</td>
<td>75°F – 85°F (24°C – 29°C)</td>
<td>50% – 60%</td>
<td>Temperate forest, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Python</td>
<td>80°F – 85°F (27°C – 29°C)</td>
<td>60% – 65%</td>
<td>Savannah, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boa Constrictor</td>
<td>80°F – 85°F (27°C – 29°C)</td>
<td>50% – 70%</td>
<td>Tropical rain forest, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Python</td>
<td>80°F – 85°F (27°C – 29°C)</td>
<td>70% – 75%</td>
<td>Tropical rain forest, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Turtle</td>
<td>80°F – 90°F (27°C – 33°C)</td>
<td>50% – 60%</td>
<td>Tropical rain forest, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-footed Tortoise</td>
<td>80°F – 85°F (27°C – 29°C)</td>
<td>50% – 70%</td>
<td>Tropical rain forest, terrestrial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A basking spot that is 5°F – 10°F (-15°C – -12°C) warmer should be provided; nighttime temperature should be 10°F – 15°F (-12°C – -9°C) cooler.

Purchasing tips

- Only buy reptiles that were born in captivity. This protects threatened or endangered species and provides you with a healthier pet.
- Do not buy hatchlings or very small babies. They are very delicate and can be difficult to care for.
- Choose a reptile that is active and alert. If possible, watch the pet as it is fed. If that is not possible, ask to see its records to determine when it was fed and whether it is eating. Do not buy from that source if such records are missing or you are not allowed to observe the reptile being fed.
- Make sure the reptile has been housed properly and fed the proper diet. A bad start in life can cause health problems later on.

Minimum enclosure size requirements*
Species minimum dimension requirement

**Lizards**
Length: 3x snout-to-tail length
Depth: 2x snout-to-tail length
Height-terrestrial (ground living): 1.5x snout-to-tail length
Height-arboreal (tree living): 3x snout-to-tail length

**Snakes**
Length: 1x adult snake’s total length
Depth: 2/3 adult snake’s total length
Height-terrestrial: 3/4x adult snake’s total length
Height-arboreal: 1x adult snake’s total length

**Aquatic and semi-aquatic turtles/terrapins**
Length: 5x carapace (shell) length for aquatic species
– For semi-aquatic species 1/3 of total cage length should be land
Water height: 2x carapace length
Total height: 2x carapace length plus 12 inches

**Tortoises**
Length: 5x carapace length
Depth: 4x carapace length
Height: 2x carapace length

*Sizes listed are the minimum. Enclosures should be as large as possible.
For carnivores (meat eaters) & omnivores (meat & vegetable eaters)

Commonly available prey items that can be fed:

Vertebrate – Have a vertebral column (backbone)
- Chickens
- Fish (numerous species)
- Gerbils
- Guinea pigs
- Mice
- Quail
- Rabbits
- Rats

Invertebrate – No vertebral column
- Crickets
- Earthworms
- Fruit flies
- Hissing roaches
- Mealworms
- Night crawlers
- Silkworms
- Superworms
- Sweetworms
- Waxworms

These items are usually available at PetSmart, specialty pet stores or through many Internet-based companies. Most prey items are available live, frozen or pre-killed. Some species respond better to live food. A variety of prey items should be provided.

For herbivores (plant eaters) and omnivores*

Fruits and vegetables that can be fed:
- Apples
- Bananas
- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Kale
- Mustard greens
- Okra
- Papaya
- Parsley
- Peas
- Sprouts
- Squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Turnip greens
- Zucchini

*Items offered should not be limited to this list. A variety of fruits and vegetables should be provided. Omnivores must also be fed prey items to stay healthy.

Can a reptile be harmful to my family?

All reptiles are potential carriers of diseases capable of being spread from animals to people such as *Salmonella*. Pregnant women, young children and those with compromised immune systems (cancer, AIDS, chronic disease) should avoid contact with reptiles.

Some things you can do to ensure you keep your reptile and family healthy are:
- Buy only captive bred reptiles.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap after handling a reptile, its enclosure or accessories.
- Wear gloves and a mask when cleaning a reptile's enclosure.
- Do not kiss a reptile or let it kiss you.
- Do not clean your reptile’s enclosure or accessories in a food-preparation area.
- Do not bathe your reptile in the family bathtub or sink. They prefer their own water space.
- If bitten or scratched by a reptile, thoroughly clean the affected area with a disinfectant and warm water and consult your physician.
- Have reptiles examined by a veterinarian twice a year.

If you have any questions or concerns about the health of your pet, please contact your Banfield doctor.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.