

# Care Guidelines for Common Non-typical Pets

Guidelines for this Just in Time Training are meant as general points to consider in the evaluation, care and diet of animals that may be temporarily housed and cared for during emergency or disaster sheltering situations. Parameters given in this document are based on general range tolerances for a taxonomic group, not necessarily any specific species within that group. Our job is to evaluate and provide reasonable care and safe environment for animals while under our care, until they are able to be returned to the owner or more a permanent arrangement can be made for their care and housing. Diets for many animals kept as pets vary widely. Most have commercially prepared diets that can be obtained from local or national distributors and shipped in during disasters. Some quick substitutions and recommendations for diets are listed with the group overviews.

Incoming animals should be housed in separate isolation areas according to species or category grouping. This will cut down on stress, cross species transmission of diseases, including zoonotics and allow for easier environment control, cleaning and tracking. Always use proper protective gear when interacting with unknown animals. Remember these animals are coming out of a disaster or unknown environment and may have an increased contaminate potential. As part of incoming evaluation animals should be scanned for micro chip. Different animals have specific locations for placement of chip. Recommended insertion sites are: **Dogs, cats, ferrets, rabbits & other mammals:** Scan down the center of the back over the top of the shoulder down to the point of the elbow on both sides of the animal.

**Horses:** Scan left side of neck, halfway between poll & withers 1" from the top of the mane.

**Birds:** Scan left pectoral (breast) muscle.

**Emus & Ostrich:** Scan upper portion of neck on left side (behind ear area).

**Deer, goats or other similar animals:** Scan both sides under the base of the tail and the top of left ear as it joins the head. Goats also under right dew claw.

**Pigs and other food animals:** Scan right hind leg just above the dew claw or base of right ear at the top as it joins the head. (these are sites not normally used for food)

**Other pet animals:** Potbellied pigs, pet goats and other animals may have been micro chipped in the area between shoulder blades as if it were a dog.

**Turtles and Iguanas:** Scan left rear leg at base of body.

**Snakes/other reptiles:** Scan tail behind vent and entire length of animal.

**Monkeys:** Other than special research scanning needs, chip as canine/feline.

If more detail is needed for any listed species, or a species is presented that is not listed contact a major zoological institution or veterinary college for identification and husbandry assistance.

When removing small animals such as rodents, reptiles, birds, from a disaster event remove them with the cage they are found in, when possible. This will cut down on potential escape, injury to rescuer, additional stress or injury to the animal and gives housing for the animal at the evacuation shelter. Once you have the animal and cage back at the staging area you are in a more controlled environment allowing for safer evaluation, manipulation and transfer of animal if needed. Cases where the cage has been damaged, is too large to move or is severely contaminated due to debris or hazmat, the animal may need to be removed from its enclosure for transport. Use caution to prevent escape or injury to the animal or rescuer. It is better to leave the animal and come back later than act to hastily and create a more serious

situation. Decontamination of incoming animals should be considered. Using several clean water baths will eliminate most contaminants. A mild solution of original Dawn dish soap can be used on mammals and birds only to cut contaminants, especially oils out of hair and feathers. Stabilize the animals prior to washing and decontaminating to prevent shock. Always use proper PPE when handling incoming animals.

Animals that live in a water environment, remove only enough water to make transporting the container manageable. Cover the top of the container with plastic trash bag and duct tape to prevent water slosh.

Do not take any food stuff from the rescue site to feed the animal, food could potentially be contaminated. Take containers as a reference as to what the animal is being fed, but empty the contents out to prevent accidental feeding of contaminated feed. If you are certain that food has not been contaminated and container was sealed you may consider taking food for that animals use.

Use individuals that are experienced, knowledgeable and comfortable in handling the particular species you are dealing with. This will minimize injury to the handler as well as the animal.

When in doubt it is better to do nothing than do something which may cause irreparable damage. Seek expert advice.

# **Reptiles**

## **Turtle**

### **Intake evaluation:**

Head – should be symmetrical, if not suspect abscess or skeletal trauma

Eyes – should appear clear and moist, should not be any puffiness, irritation or discharge

Sunken appearance , loose skin may indicate dehydration

Mouth - check for stomatitis, lesions and ulcerations

Limbs - look for lesions

Check shell – look at top and bottom for fractures, is shell hard, any discoloration, fungus or external parasites; such as leeches or ticks

Weight - should feel heavy to size

Vent - no swelling, prolapsed or caking of feces around anal vent

Activity level which may only be determined by sitting animal in quiet place and observing

Always wear gloves and face protection while cleaning or handling turtles to prevent zoonotic disease exposure.

May be set on a can or other object that suspends feet off the ground for easy evaluation preventing escape

After completing exam place animal in previously prepared enclosure, allow for adjustment period, observe breathing eating and movement

Water turtles may be kept in a water soluble tetracycline antibiotic solution up to 3 days (change twice a day) 250mg to 10 gal of water; oxytetracycline or chlortetracycline can be used at same solution

Do not use tetracycline if shell fungus is suspected

### **Environmental**

#### **Terrestrial tortoise general parameters**

Similar size animals may be kept together, or if previously housed together

Recommended ambient temperature 78°-85°F

An external heat source may need to be provided as well as area to get away from direct heat source

Recommended Humidity 60-75%

Keep out of direct draft or direct exposure to ventilation ducts, but provide an adequate air exchange.

Substrate in holding tank - news paper works well for easy cleaning and minimizing pathogen growth

Feed and water containers – should not tip and be low enough for easy access by animal

### **Diet**

Tortoises are generally omnivorous

Various mixed greens, fruits in limited quantities, mushrooms, crickets, and wax worms can be fed; food should be dusted once a week with a good reptile vitamin supplement.

#### **Aquatic turtle species general parameters**

Similar size animals may be kept together, or if previously housed together

Recommended water temperature range 80-85°F,

Water should be chlorine free

If filtering system is not provided, water should be changed twice weekly

Basking area must be provided; extra heat lamp may be needed for this area

Natural or unfiltered UV light provided is best.

### Diet

Generally smaller immature water turtles are plant eaters, larger more mature animals become more carnivorous. Diet should be at least 65% - 85% meat.

Dark green leafy vegetables can be used to fill the rest of the diet.

Meat should be dusted once a week with a good reptile vitamin

### Snake

#### Intake evaluation:

Eyes –should be clear. Cloudiness may indicate retained eye caps from incomplete shedding or on set of shedding or indicator of some other potential problem

Skin – should be shiny with colors sharp – dullness may indicate onset of shedding, check for lesions, injuries ticks and mites or unshed skin patches or lesions or wounds

Mouth/ nose -No cheesy deposits or bubbling in nose and mouth, this may indicate respiratory or fungal problem

Body –should be rounded. No spinal deformity, lumps or depressions in rib cage

Vent - no swelling, prolapsed, or caking of feces around vent opening

Activity level - Sluggish may be indication of low body temperature or dehydration

After completing exam place in previously prepared enclosure allow to adjust observe breathing and movement prior to attempting to feed animal

Always wear gloves and face protection while cleaning or handling to prevent zoonotic disease exposure.

#### Environmental

Recommended Ambient temperature 75°-85°F, external heat may need to be provided under tank heat source works the best if needed. Leave ample area in tank for snake to recoil from direct heat to allow for cooling

Recommended Humidity 55-70%

Similar size and species may be kept together

Keep out of direct draft or direct exposure to ventilation ducts but provide adequate air exchange

Water containers should not tip and be low enough for easy access and large enough for snake to immerse in

Light - Recommended unfiltered natural light UV light or full spectrum florescent

Substrate in holding tank - news paper works well for easy cleaning and minimizing pathogen growth

Snake may be washed or allowed to immerse in lukewarm water to remove grime, dirt or feces do not use any chemicals to wash animal

### Diet

Most pet snakes are fed rodents appropriate to snakes size.

Do not attempt to feed for at least 48 hours after moving animal

Frozen rodents can be obtained, thaw completely to room temperature. Do not place in a microwave or hot water to thaw.

If snake does not eat within 30 minutes, remove food from tank

Feed snakes individually to avoid injury

Offer food twice a week or as the snake's activity level increases

Wash hands after handling food animals to avoid snake mistaking hand for mouse

### Lizard

#### Intake evaluation:

Skin & Head –check for lesions, mites

Eyes – should be round and clear, not sunken

Mouth – no cheesy deposits, swelling or bubbly mucus  
Body & tail - should be round firm not soft or bloated and hips not protruding or lesions or wounds  
Limbs - no swelling, abnormal growths or discoloration  
Anal Vents - no swelling, prolepses or caking of feces  
Activity level - Sluggish may be indication of low body temperature or dehydration

After completing exam place in previously prepared enclosure allow to adjust and observe breathing, eating and movement  
Always wear gloves and face protection while cleaning or handling to prevent zoonotic disease exposure.  
Lizards may be washed in lukewarm water to remove grime, dirt, feces or flaking skin patched do not use any chemicals to wash animal

### Environmental

Recommended ambient temperature 75<sup>o</sup>-85<sup>o</sup>F  
Recommended Humidity 50-70%  
Lizards should be housed individually to reduce territorial aggression  
Light unfiltered natural light, UV light or full spectrum florescent is best  
Keep out of direct draft or direct exposure to ventilation ducts but provide adequate air exchange  
Water containers should not tip and be low enough for easy access by animal.

### Diet

Do not over feed, remove uneaten food  
Vitamin deficiencies is very common in captive lizards  
A reptile vitamin dust should be added to all feeds  
Lizards generally eat daily

### Herbivorous lizard

40% dark leafy greens, collard greens, turnip greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens (with flowers), escarole, water cress  
40% other vegetables such as fleshed squashes, parsnip, asparagus, okra, alfalfa (mature, not sprouts), onions, mushrooms, bell peppers, sweet potato, zucchini, yellow squash,  
10% fruit  
Tofu can be occasionally offered for supplemental protein

### Carnivorous lizards swallow food whole

Depending on size and species, appropriate size to be swallowed whole  
Crickets, mealworms, super worms, wax worms or mice (if frozen rodents are used allow to thaw completely to room temperature. Do not place in a microwave) places in plastic bag and allow to thaw in warm water or place out, thaw to room temperature

## **Crocodylian (alligators, caiman, crocodiles)**

### Intake evaluation:

Any hands on evaluation should be done with care, secure the mouth with tape and place a towel over the eyes  
Check for ulcers and exudates in the mouth which may be indicative of pox virus or stomatitis (mouth rot).  
Check for loss of muscle mass around the tail and neck,  
Check for reduced volume of the abdomen this can indicate anorexia or poor digestion efficiency.

The belly skin should appear bright and clean.

Serious problems such as septicemia and other blood born diseases can often be diagnosed from discolorations of the belly skin.

Check the upper and lower body surface thoroughly for physical injuries, or bacterial, fungal or parasitic problems.

### Environmental

Recommended environmental temperature range 84° to 93°F; Caiman show a higher sensitivity to temperature changes than alligators

Crocodylians are semi-aquatic creatures. They need an area to get out of the water in order to regulate body temperature. Like other reptiles an external heat source may need to be provided

Water should be chlorine free

If filtering system is not provided, water should be changed twice weekly

It is a good idea to consider a fluorescent light that emits UV waves.

### Diet

Strictly carnivorous - small insects and fish when young, a wider variety of larger prey as they grow, cut chicken parts work well. Offer food three to four times a week

When a crocodylian stops feeding, it can be an indicator of serious health problem, improper temperature regulation or stress.

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## **Amphibians(frogs, toads, salamanders)**

### Intake evaluation:

Body – should be moist and glossy with no lesions

Limbs – no swelling abnormal growths or discoloration

Eyes – should be round clear not sunken

Activity level – As with all exothermic animals' sluggish behavior may be indication of low body temperature or dehydration

### Environmental

Always wear gloves and face protection while cleaning amphibian tanks to prevent zoonotic disease exposure.

Avoid sunlight/heat lamps – may decrease humidity and dry out animal.

Ventilation must be provided without causing drafts.

Temperate species salamanders: 50-61°F (some believe that in temperatures above 68°F they can't eat enough to maintain body weight); Tropical salamanders' 59-68°F (+ very high humidity).

Temperate Frogs: 68-77°F; Tropical Frogs 77-86°F

Do not use chemicals to wash holding tanks, amphibians absorb moisture and other compounds through their skin.

Amphibians also absorb oxygen through the skin so consider environmental vapors, such as ammonia which may be toxic.

### Diet

Will eat primarily what ever fits in their mouth. Vitamin dust should be added to all feeds

Crickets, mealworms, super worms, and wax worms

Some amphibians will eat fish food such as shrimp pellets, brine shrimp, or turtle floating food sticks.

One of the differences between frogs and toads; is frogs have a row of teeth, watch your fingers

## **Mammals**

### **Rabbits**

#### **Intake evaluation**

Eyes –should be round clear and bright, not sunken

Posterior vent openings - no swelling prolepses caking of feces or discharge

Mouth - check for malocclusion misalignment of teeth, lesions or sores, caking around lips or discharge

Nose – check for caking or discharge around nose, wheezing and sneezing. If these signs are present isolate. Consider if rabbits has had contact with wild populations, don't rule out tularemia infection

Head/ears – head held normal position, ears free of wax build-up or mites

#### **Environmental**

Temperature range for a rabbit is 60<sup>o</sup>-70<sup>o</sup>F. When the temperature gets into the mid 70's, an increase in drooling, and nasal discharge may be seen. If air temperatures reach the upper 80's or beyond, especially if the humidity is high, there is potential for a fatal heat stroke. On very hot days, when air conditioning is not available, it is helpful to leave a plastic milk jug filled with frozen water in the cage, for a portable "air conditioner". Rabbits should be kept in the COOLEST and least humid area

Excess liking of paws whipping of ears salivation signs of hypothermia

#### **Diet**

Good quality pellets, fresh hay (alfalfa, timothy or oat), fresh vegetables. Iceberg lettuce and celery have little nutritional value and should be avoided

### **Chinchillas**

#### **Intake evaluation**

Head/ears – should be head held normal position, ears free of wax build-up or mites

Body – no hair loss, oily appearance of texture

Mouth/ nose – check for malocclusion of teeth, lesions or sores, caking or discharge, excess face washing or excess wetness around mouth

Wear latex gloves when handling animal, oils in your skin may promote hair loss

#### **Environmental**

Recommended temperatures: 50<sup>o</sup>-60<sup>o</sup>F (higher than 80<sup>o</sup> F can be fatal). Rubbing saliva over face and body are signs of heat related stress

Recommended humidity: 40% or less.

Provide access for dust bath for animals to roll and cut body oils several times a day, fine sand works best to reduce oils in skin resulting in hair loss

Excess liking of paws whipping of ears salivation signs of hypothermia

Do not house males and females together to avoid aggression.

## Diet

Should be made up of good quality pellets, fresh hay (alfalfa, timothy or oat), and fresh vegetables.

## **Guinea pigs**

### Intake evaluation

Mouth/ nose – check for malocclusion of teeth, lesions or sores, caking or discharge

Posterior vent openings - no swelling prolepses caking of feces or discharge

### Environmental

Room temperature range 55-70°F – above 80-85°F may cause heat stroke.

Do not house guinea pigs with other animals (such as rabbits, cats, dogs- Bordatella bacteria carriers) as this may cause serious disease in guinea pigs.

Shredded paper is best for bedding

Wire bottom caging should not be used to prevent trauma to feet

## Diet

Good quality Guinea pigs pellets, fresh hay (alfalfa, timothy or oat), fresh vegetables. Guinea pigs require higher vitamin C content in diet

## **Prairie Dogs**

### Intake evaluation

Mouth/ nose – check for malocclusion of teeth, lesions or sores, caking or discharge

Posterior vent openings - no swelling prolepses caking of feces or discharge

Head/ears – should be head held normal position, ears free of wax build-up or mites

Body – no hair loss

Any animals that are suspect to have been in contact with wild populations of rodents should be isolated. Any animal showing symptoms of a respiratory infection such as nasal discharge, conjunctivitis (red, runny eyes), cough, fever and lethargy should be isolated immediately. These symptoms are usually followed by the development of a nodular rash, which may be hard to see under the fur but can usually be felt as bumps on the skin, these may be signs of bubonic plague monkey pox or other possible zoonotic concern.

### Environmental

Exposure to temperatures lower than 50 may result in hypothermia

Oils in cedar bedding can cause respiratory difficulty and allergies

Prairie dog will actually want to find and use a litter pan,

## Diet

Grasses are the preferred food of the prairie dog

diet of fresh hay, grasses, fresh fruits and vegetables, seeds and nuts, and fresh water.

Do not over feed, Prairie Dogs are prone to obesity in captivity.

## **Mice/Rats/Hamsters/Gerbils**

### Intake evaluation

Mouth/ nose –no sniffing, sneezing, labored breathing,

Eyes -no squinting, red-brown tearing

Hair coat should not be rough

Head –held normal position, ears free of wax build-up or mites check for neurological signs

Posterior vent openings - no swelling prolepses caking of feces, discharge or wet appearance, or blood.

Any animals that are suspect to have been in contact with wild populations of rodents should be isolated

Observe any animal that has segregated itself from the group sitting in a hunched position this can be an indication of illness

Avoid picking up animals by the tail, not even at the base, this may cause injury to tail and spine.

\*A Gerbil's mucus is often mistaken for blood, as it is a reddish color

### Environmental

Recommended Temperatures of 65-80°F

Recommended Humidity at 30-70%

Housing should be large enough to accommodate animals to avoid fights

Cedar shavings can be irritating to skin and mucous membranes, contain oils which inhibit liver function. Shredded paper is best for bedding

When using aquariums for housing, clean regularly to avoid moisture and ammonium build up in tank

### Diet

Commercial rodent pellets are the best

Common seed-based "small rodent" feeds don't meet all nutritional requirements.

small pieces of dog biscuits salad sprouts, tiny pieces of apple, raw nuts, raisins, various salad greens can be used to supplement, excess fruits and vegetables can cause diarrhea.

## **Hedgehog**

### Intake evaluation

Take care when handling, spines can be sharp and saliva from bite can cause skin irritation

Body –no loss of spines, fleas

Limbs –no swelling, abnormal growths, discoloration or lesions

Since animal will roll into a ball when scared evaluation is sometimes difficult

### Environmental

Recommended Temperature range 75-85°F.

Recommended Humidity – moderate 40-70%

Use hard wood shaving or shredded paper instead of pine or cedar shavings, they can be irritating to skin and mucous membranes of animal

### Diet

Hedgehogs are insectivore/omnivores. Diets should be fairly high in protein and low in fat

Cat or dog foods alone are not adequate as the sole diet but will work in an emergency

Crickets, mealworms, super worms, and wax worms

Mixture of diced leafy dark greens (spinach, kale, leaf lettuce), diced carrot, diced apple, banana, diced grape or raisin, chopped hard boiled egg, add ground pet vitamin tab

Do not over feed

Shallow water containers so animal does not crawl in and drown, water bottle works best

## **Sugar glider**

## Intake evaluation

Sugar Gliders are a marsupial, only females have a pouch  
Abdomen – no swelling around pouch, check for possible joeys (babies) if female  
Eyes – should be black with no flecks of white or clouding. They should be bright, alert, and responsive, and not sunken in.  
Nose – should be pink and moist with no discharge or crust.  
Calcium deficiency can cause paralysis and even be fatal  
Feet - should be pink and soft. Check for injured toes.  
Coat - should be smooth without any missing hair patches. (This does not include the "bald spots" on a male's head where the scent glands are).  
Ears –check for mites.

## Environmental

Exposure to bright sun can damage their sensitive eyes.  
Another requirement is a nest box to sleep in during the day.  
Avoid using cedar or pine shavings or shavings impregnated with chlorophyll. These bedding materials can cause irritation to the eyes, nose, throat, lungs and skin.  
Like many small animals, sugar glider teeth never stop growing and they need something to gnaw on. However, unlike hamsters and rabbits, gliders won't touch anything artificial DO NOT USE ANY BRANCH THAT HAS BEEN SPRAYED WITH PESTICIDES.  
Recommended Temperature 70-90°F  
Recommended Humidity – moderate 40-65%.

## Diet

Insectivorous /carnivorous diet, along with sources of fruit sugars  
Nectars - parrot formulated nectar can be used  
Crickets, mealworms, super worms, and wax worms  
Mix of diced leafy dark greens (spinach, kale, leaf lettuce), diced carrot, diced apple, banana, diced grape or raisin, sweet potato, hard-cooked egg yolk with a ground pet tab

## **Ferrets**

### Intake evaluation

Ferrets can inflict a nasty bite, wear gloves  
Head/ears – head held normal position, ears free of wax build-up or mites  
Body –no hair loss, oily appearance of texture  
Limbs – no swelling, abnormal growths or lesions  
Posterior vent openings - no swelling prolepses caking of feces or discharge

### Environmental

Recommended Temperature: 65-75°F  
Recommended Humidity: 45-55%

### Diet

Ferrets are true carnivores; they cannot handle fiber greater than 4%, ferrets cannot digest fiber. dairy products, fruits and vegetables, will produce diarrhea.

## **Small Wild Captive Bred or Hybrid Carnivores**

### Intake evaluation

Handle with care.  
Treat as domestic cat till more appropriate housing and care can be found.  
Isolate to reduce stress

## Diet

High quality cat food will work well; if cat is not eating add small amounts of raw meat to the mix. Some require modified vitamin and mineral intakes. If not sure check for specific nutritional requirements

## **Primates**

Simians (monkeys & apes) are wild animals; they are not domestic pets but many are kept by private individuals and occasionally arrive at emergency shelters with their owners. Other similar animals kept as pets are prosimians or lesser primates (marmosets, lemurs and the alike). Some primates such as capuchins have been utilized as service animals. Proper PPE and safety precautions must be used when working around them. Bowels and feces of a stressed or frightened primate become very loose creating a higher potential for spread of disease.

All primates should be observed for lesions and ulcerations especially around the face and mouth. A wide variety of diseases can be transmitted between primates and humans.

## **Monkeys**

### Diet

Old world primates, those from Africa and Asia

New world primates, those from South America

Mix of leafy dark greens (spinach, kale, leaf lettuce), carrot, apple, banana, grape or raisin, sweet potato hard-cooked egg yolk with a ground pet tab. Crickets, meal worms or a small amount of meat protein may also be offered

Do not over feed

Commercial diets are available

## **Lesser Primates**

### Diet

crickets, mealworms, super worms, and wax worms

Mix of diced leafy dark greens (spinach, kale, leaf lettuce), diced carrot, diced apple, banana, diced grape or raisin, sweet potato, hard-cooked egg yolk with a ground pet tab

### Environmental

Recommended Temperatures – mid 70's to low 80's, they do not have as well developed a thermal regulatory system as most mammals, when chilled they exhibit problems in equilibrium

## **Llamas/ Alpacas/Guanacos**

### Intake evaluation

Check for embedded halters

Because of thick wool hand evaluation is needed to determine body condition

Common for toe nails to become overgrown causing lameness

Check between toes for foreign objects

Can be stressed and over heated due to exertion,

Provide shade

Fearful or stressed animals will lay down refusing to move

They will spit or bite when agitated, avoid direct stare this may also promote spitting, place towel over nose to prevent spitting.

Animals highly imprinted around humans may develop dominance disorders and become aggressive and very dangerous; this is more common in males

Circulatory vessels do not lie as in other common hoof stock check before inserting IV

### Diet

Alfalfa (including alfalfa-grass mix) is too rich for a llama's digestive system, grass hay is sufficient.

Basic cattle feed can be used as a supplement  
Access to free choice water

## **Swine/ Pot Belly Pigs**

### **Intake evaluation**

Skin – no reddening, rough scaly appearance, check for external parasites

Head -no tilt, shaking or neurological signs

Lameness due to long toe nails

Can be stressed and over heated do to exertion, do not hose down this can send then into cardiac arrest. Provide damp cool place allow pig to enter at own will.

Pigs are omnivorous and will eat whatever is provided. Avoid overfeeding

A pig that is not willing to eat is not feeling well or is in extreme pain.

Pigs are susceptible to problems of the upper respiratory system, particularly the nose. Check for nasal discharge or deformities of the snout.

Fresh water should be available to all animals at all times.

A pig that has been deprived of water may over drink. When this happens the fluid goes to the brain and causes swelling. This can cause them to go into seizures, paddling motions with the feet, coma and death. Provide water in small amounts at intake.

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## **Birds**

### **Intake evaluation**

Many different species of birds are kept as pets. Diets and basic care requirements may vary greatly even with in a grouping classification of birds.

Intake evaluation; some general signs common to all distressed or ill birds

Check for poor general appearance (feathers "ratty")

Eye -no discharge, cloudy eyes, swelling around eyes

Nasal -no discharge, blocked nostrils, sneezing (excessive) wheezing or "wet" breathing or tail "bobbing" with each breath

Body -no lumps, bumps, swellings or bulges on the body

Legs –check for lameness or swollen joints

Swelling of the feet "bumble foot"

Vent –no diarrhea, prolapsed

Other abnormal signs; Not perching, sitting on bottom of cage, drooping wings, staining of the feathers around the vent, excessive scratching, overgrown beak or nails, baldness

When holding birds wrap in a towel, secure the beak, wings and legs to prevent injury of bird or handler.

Be careful not to hold bird too tightly around the chest, this can restrict the birds ability to breath properly as they have no diaphragm to help with the inflation of the lungs.

### **Environmental**

Caging - birds need to be able to stretch their wings and flap them without hitting anything.

Cages should be placed in a draft free area that is well lit, but not in direct sunlight.

Temperatures and humidity that is comfortable for humans is adequate, signs of overheating are gaping beak, elevated breathing, ruffling of feathers.

## **Ratites**

Ostrich (2 toes), Emus (3 toes), Rhea (3 toes) animal size in descending order.

Can be stressed and over heated do to exertion, resulting in shock or death

Look for; excessive feather loss, swelling of the cloacae area, cuts, injuries to neck and legs

### Environmental

Water - provided in large container, birds drink with a scooping motion

Keep separately from horses do to possible transmission of Equine Encephalitis

Danger zone never stand directly in front or behind ratites,

Areas of isolation or visual blocks such as tarps will keep birds calmer

Check area for shinny objects birds will pick them up and swallow them

### Diet

Mixture of cheap dry dog food, whole corn and rabbit pellets

Grass hay may be offered as a supplement

Commercial diets are also available

## **Parrots**

### Environmental

Parrots are very sensitive to changes in temperature. Keep the cage in an area where temperatures are stable. Keep away from direct drafts

Provide perches and an area large enough that the bird can extend the wings to a natural length

### Diet

May vary widely, no generic mixture for all birds; from seed, nuts. fruits and vegetables to nectar.

## **Small cage Birds**

### Intake evaluation

Injuries to wings, legs, beak

Do you see any parasites on their skin?

Dehydration is a concern with caged birds

Do they feel abnormally thin usually indicated by prominent keel bone?

Runny eyes and nose or crust eyes and nasal opening of beak.

Upper respiratory infections and impaction.

### Diet

May vary widely, from seed, fruits, vegetables, nectar and insects.

### Environmental

Provide perching area for birds to rest on

Do not over crowd cage, each bird should have enough area to stretch wings to full length

House in quiet dimly lit area

## **Water Fowl**

### Intake evaluation

Injuries to wings, legs, beak

Swelling of the feet "bumble foot"

Oiled and matted feathers

Bathing even for decontamination purposes removes protective of feathers animals more susceptible to hypothermia and removes buoyancy properties do not start bathing or decontamination process without contacting a wild life rehabilitator

Are they suffering from a loss of balance?

Is their appetite diminished?

Are they ruffled and apathetic?

Do you see any parasites on their skin?

Do they feel abnormally thin usually indicated by prominent keel bone?

runny eyes and nose or crust eyes and nose.

upper respiratory infections and impaction.

### Environmental

Access to clean, fresh water is very important both for drinking and bathing. Bathing water should be deep enough for animal to splash but if birds feathers have been contaminated do not give them to access to water that is deeper than half the height of the bird they will not have sufficient buoyancy and sink

Control wings and neck and legs

Lager fowl should be held under the arm with the cloacae facing forward,

A pillow case with a small hole cut in the corner can be placed over the bird have the head protrude from the hole wrapping the bird in the pillow case this can allow for easier manipulation of the animal

### Diet

Waterfowl should be fed medicated feeds

Cracked corn, rabbit pellets is an adequate substitute is a commercial mixture is not available. Access to clean, fresh water is very important both for drinking and bathing is a must

When possible allow birds to graze on grass or provide some chopped hay

## **Invertebrates**

There are over 2 million species of invertebrates many species are found in the pet trade. Care varies widely from species to species

### **Tarantulas**

#### Intake evaluation

Signs of ill health - Legs tucked or non reactive

They will lie still on their back for several hours during molt and be still for several days till skin hardens

#### Environmental

Should be housed individually

Recommended Temperatures 75-84°F

Recommended Humidity - not be less than 50-60% if humidity is too low there is a chance that it's exoskeleton (skin) may split causing the animal to bleed to death.

Air flow plays a factor in keeping down molds and fungus.

Tarantulas should be provided with some type of hiding place

Most of their fluids come from the prey they digest but they may require small shallow dish for water

#### Diet

Crickets, mealworms, super worms, and wax worms no larger than ½ the size of the spider

Any live food remaining after about 45 minutes should be removed

## **Hermit crab**

### Environmental

Avoid direct drafts or sunlight

Recommended Humidity - no lower than 70%, but no higher than 90% lower than 70% will cause suffocation

Recommended Temperature - 70-80°F

An improper environment can cause crab to lose limbs and ultimately die.

Will need to provide two water dishes for the crabs. All species of hermit crab need to have access to both freshwater and saltwater, use aquarium salt, Never use table salt because it is poisonous to the crab. A rodent salt block can be substituted. The dishes should be deep enough for your crabs to submerge, but make sure they are able to get out

Use de-chlorinated water

### Diet

Crabs are omnivorous - they do well on anything we eat, but stay away from highly-processed foods and sugars. You can feed them meat, fish, vegetables and fruit even citrus fruits.

Tannin-rich foods, such as oak leaves and tree bark are good. Avoid anything that may be treated with pesticides or wash thoroughly and allow to completely dry.

## **Hissing cockroach**

### Intake evaluation

Remove any dead animals from cage

### Environmental

Place Hissing cockroach cage in a warm area 75-90 F

Humidity 75 to 80%.

Keep away from direct sunlight.

Petroleum jelly around the upper lip of the terrarium will prevent your hissing cockroach from climbing the walls of the terrarium and clinging to the lid.

Clean 2 inch thick substrate of peat moss, or potting soil. Substrate should be kept dry at all times.

Provide some hiding places, which can be as simple as cardboard rolls from toilet paper, pieces of cardboard egg cartons, cork bark, driftwood, and small cardboard boxes.

### Diet

Soak a cotton ball in water and place it in another small ceramic dish.

small pieces of vegetables, dry dog food, crackers, fruit, and bread

Replace the food every few days.

## **Fish**

Determine if fish are in a fresh or salt water environment. Salt water fish are more sensitive to changes in environment than fresh water species and require more specialized care.

Removal of fish may be difficult due to the nature of their housing and living environment.

Empty only enough water out that makes tank handle able to move cover top of tank with plastic bag and seal with duct tape to prevent further spillage. If possible take filtration system with tank. If unable to transport tank due to size or condition, place water from tank in a sealable container (Ziploc bags work well, except for spiny fish) then place fish in container, seal and transport.

Agitating water periodically will serve to adequately oxygenate water on temporary basis.

House in moderate temperature typically range from 74 – 82°F

Do not house in direct sun light

Filtering water through a fine cotton cloth will remove most contaminants until a filtration system can be hooked up. Replace water gradually in about 20% increments at a time, with fresh de chlorinated water.

Never use detergents to clean your fish tank or aquarium decorations.

## **Resource Contacts**

Santa Fe Community College & Teaching Zoo, Gainesville, FL. (352)395-5604

Moorpark College & Teaching Zoo, Moorpark, CA. (805)378-1441

American Sanctuary Association, Las Vegas, NV. (702)804-8562

Zoological Association of America, Tampa, FL. (813)935-8552 ext. 310

American Zoological Association, Silver Spring, MD. (301)562-0777

## **References**

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Hand-rearing Wild and Domestic Mammals: Laurie J. Gage DVM

Practical Wildlife Care: Les Stocker, MBE

