

Cold Weather Tips for Exotic Animal Pets

While most exotic pets are housed indoors, there are still some key concepts to keep in mind when winter comes around.

1. Taking your animal outside in the cold (say on a trip to the veterinarian) does not mean that the animal will catch a cold. Take reasonable precautions to shelter it from the elements—wind, rain, and snow; but do not get too worked up about it.
2. Warm up your car before transporting the animal for a long ride. Be aware of it being in the car in regards to stopping at places or for long rides. Treat your pet as you would a newborn infant.
3. Birds can have baths in the winter. We recommend daily baths, if it is not a stressful experience for the bird. Often the best way bathe a tamer bird is to take them into the shower with the owner. Baths should be done early in the day to allow full drying. Allow the birds to dry off in the bathroom before moving to a cooler room. Hairdryers can be used on the cool setting only if they do not scare the bird.
4. Transport reptiles in a warmed container, such as a ventilated cooler, that is kept in the desired temperature zone for the animal. Reptiles rely on their environment to determine body temperature.
5. When housing reptiles at home, remember that the house temperature drops as winter comes and adjust their heat sources accordingly. The most important part of your heating set-up is a good quality digital thermometer. Place the thermometer where the reptile will be and measure the warm and cool ends of the cages as well as the night temperature. If these temperatures fall outside of recommended ranges, then provide a supplemental radiant heat source (lamp—not hot rock or heating pad).

** Hibernation is not recommended for any reptile without a veterinary consultation first. Many pets die every year from incorrect hibernating techniques. Have check-ups and bloodwork done before and after hibernating.
6. Ultraviolet light is extremely important for reptiles. We recommend fluorescent Reptisun® or incandescent PowerSun® from ZooMed®. This light needs to shine directly on the reptile with no glass, screening, plexiglass, etc.... between them and the reptile. Current recommendations also find the former bulb needs to be within 12 inches of the animal, while the second bulb should be about 24 inches away from the reptile, both on 12 hours/off 12 hours. Change the bulb every six months.

7. Christmas trees and holiday treats are not good things for any pet. Chocolate, alcohol, carbonated beverages, caffeine, high sugar, high salt, and high fat food are all harmful to most pets.
8. Watch birds, ferrets, and rabbits for chewing on electrical cords.
9. Carbon monoxide poisoning is also a risk for all pets. Make sure carbon monoxide detectors are near your pets.