

Animal Welfare (Private Keeping of Native Reptiles) Mandatory Code of Practice 2023*

Disallowable instrument DI2023-5

made under the

Animal Welfare Act 1992, Section 23 (Mandatory code of practice)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Animal Welfare (Private Keeping of Native Reptiles) Mandatory Code of Practice 2023*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences the day after notification.

3 Approval

I approve the Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Native Reptiles, attached to this instrument, as a mandatory code of practice under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

Chris Steel MLA
Minister for Transport and City Services

13 December 2022

*Name amended under Legislation Act, s 60

ACT Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Native Reptiles

Table of contents

Introduction	1
Purpose of the Code.....	1
Scope.....	1
Structure of the Code.....	3
Compliance with the Code.....	3
Relation to other Codes and <i>Animal Welfare Act 1992</i> and <i>Nature Conservation Act 2014</i>	4
Definitions for this Code	4
Overall welfare objectives	5
List of Mandatory Standards.....	5
1. Handling	6
Overall welfare objective	6
Objective during handling.....	6
Mandatory standards	6
Guidelines	6
2. Quarantine and health	8
Overall welfare objective	8
Objective of quarantine and health procedures	8
Mandatory standards	8
Guidelines	8
3. Environment.....	12
Overall welfare objective	12
Objective of providing a suitable living environment	12
Mandatory standards	12
Guidelines	12
4. Nutrition	16
Overall welfare objective	16
Objective for providing appropriate nutrition	16
Mandatory standards	16
Guidelines	16
5. Transport.....	18
Overall welfare objective	18

Objective for providing safe transport.....	18
Mandatory standards	18
Guidelines	18
6. Breeding.....	20
Overall Welfare Objective	20
Objectives of standards for breeding	20
Mandatory standards	20
Guidelines	20
APPENDIX I – Minimum enclosure sizes for captive reptiles	22
APPENDIX II – Useful contacts for information regarding the care of reptiles...	25
APPENDIX III – Excerpt from Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT	26
Sale processes.....	26

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Introduction

Purpose of the Code

This Code of Practice for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has been prepared by the ACT Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to outline the welfare needs of reptiles kept in captivity. Its purpose is to provide minimum standards of care for keeping reptiles in captivity by private keepers, and to complement measures to protect wild populations of reptiles from illegal harvesting and introduction of disease and genetic contamination.

Sections 109(3)(a), (b) and (c) of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* provide that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee has the functions of advising the Minister and participating in the development of approved codes of practice and mandatory codes of practice. Section 22 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* authorises the Minister to approve a code of practice related to animal welfare and section 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* authorises the Minister to approve a code of practice that is mandatory in whole or in part.

This Code is a mandatory code of practice approved under section 23. Sections 24A and 24B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* provide that it is an offence to fail to comply with a mandatory code of practice. For penalty units see *Legislation Act 2001*, section 133.

Scope

The scope of the Code is limited to Australian native reptiles kept privately. This Code does not extend to exotic reptiles, or to any reptiles held primarily for the purposes of display, such as those in zoos and reptile parks. In the ACT some reptiles that are not permitted to be kept by private keepers may be kept by zoos and reptile parks under special licences. Examples of such reptiles, which are not covered by this Code, include exotic reptiles and crocodilians.

Venomous snakes are not permitted to be kept by private keepers.

Animal welfare considerations are becoming increasingly important in the keeping of animals. This Code is based on established experience and current scientific knowledge and will be reviewed in the light of new knowledge.

The preparation of this Code of Practice is provided for under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* (the Act). The *Animal Welfare Act 1992* defines a range of actions that are considered cruel or otherwise harmful to the health and welfare of animals. This Code contains provisions relevant to the private keeping of native reptiles. These provisions supplement the general provisions of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, and are in addition to controls imposed by the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* and the *Animal Diseases Act 2005*.

A person in charge of a reptile has a legal obligation under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* to ensure that the animal receives appropriate care in order to maintain a healthy condition. Animals in captivity should be free from a) hunger and thirst, b) discomfort, c) pain, injury and disease, and d) fear and distress, and should be kept in conditions where they are able to display the broad range

of their natural behaviour. To achieve this goal reptile keepers are required to understand the physical and behavioural needs of the species they own, to keep them in an appropriate, clean environment and to supply the correct food for the species as well as clean water.

The mandatory minimum standards in this Code apply to anyone in the ACT who keeps a reptile privately. The standards have been kept to a practical and achievable level whilst maintaining acceptable animal welfare outcomes. This Code of Practice is not a complete manual on animal welfare, and will be reviewed where necessary to take account of new knowledge of reptile husbandry and welfare requirements.

Welfare Framework

The *Animal Welfare Act 1992* states the main objects of the Act are to recognise:

- a) animals are sentient beings able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them; and
- b) animals have intrinsic value, and deserve to be treated with compassion, and have a quality of life that reflects their intrinsic value; and
- c) people have a duty to care for the physical and mental welfare of animals.

This Code of Practice sets out guidelines for best practices as well as mandatory minimum standards of care for animals in line with the Objects of the Act.

There are five fundamental freedoms (the Five Freedoms for Animal Welfare) to which every animal is entitled and the more modern welfare concept of the Five Domains, namely:

Five Freedoms	Five Domains
1. Freedom from hunger and thirst.	1. Nutrition — factors that involve the animal’s access to sufficient, balanced, varied, and clean food and water.
2. Freedom from discomfort	2. Environment — factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odour, noise, and predictability
3. Freedom from pain, injury, and disease.	3. Health — factors that enable good health through the absence of disease, injury, impairment with a good fitness level.
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour.	4. Behaviour — factors that provide varied, novel, and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating, and others.
5. Freedom from fear and distress.	5. Mental state — the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort, or vitality while reducing negative

	states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain, or boredom.
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The Five Freedoms and Domains for Animal Welfare are welfare principles that provide a model that is applicable across species and situations including the Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Native Reptiles.

Structure of the Code

This Code of Practice includes **mandatory standards** that must be met by keepers and guidelines. See page 5 for definition of Keeper.

Mandatory standards

In this Code of Practice are minimum standards that must be met for the appropriate care and welfare of animals in a Keeper's home. In this Code of Practice, mandatory standards appear under the heading *Mandatory standards*, include the word "must" and are outlined in a rectangular box.

Mandatory standards must be complied with, and non-compliance can constitute an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

Guidelines

In this Code of Practice, Guidelines are to be used as further guidance on the appropriate care and welfare of animals in a Keeper's home.

Guidelines are not mandatory.

Compliance with the Code

The Code of Practice is made under section 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, which allows the Minister to approve a Code of Practice, part or all of which has mandatory force.

Failing to comply with the mandatory standards in this Code of Practice is an offence. It is also an offence to fail to follow a direction to comply with this Code of Practice. The following sections of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* outline these offences and their penalties:

- Section 24A (Reckless failure to comply with a code of practice);
- Section 24B (Failure to comply with mandatory code); and
- Section 24D (Failure to comply with direction to comply with mandatory code).

The *Nature Conservation Act 2014* makes provision for the protection and conservation of native animals and native plants, and for the reservation of areas for those purposes. Except for native animals that are classified 'Exempt' under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* a licence is required:

- to keep or sell native animals within the ACT
- for all transfers and exchanges of native animals between keepers
- to export native animals from the ACT and to import native animals into the ACT.

Where licences are required for import or export, reciprocal licences are issued by the ACT Government and the responsible Department of the other State or Territory.

All licences issued under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* for activities involving reptiles are issued in accordance with licensing criteria established by the ACT Government and are subject to conditions set by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

Reptiles must not be obtained from the wild. Special licences may be granted under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* to take from the wild for strictly scientific or educational purposes. Depending on the type of licence and the purpose of its issue, these animals may be released at the capture site at the completion of the scientific study or educational exercise after a suitable quarantine period. Native reptiles which have been rescued from the wild because they are injured or diseased may be released under licence following rehabilitation. No captive exotic reptile may be released; and no captive native reptile is permitted to be released unless a special licence has been obtained, as set out above.

All species of native reptiles are protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. Native reptiles (including 'Exempt' species) can be bred in captivity only from non-wild stock and may be acquired only from a person who obtained them legally.

Relation to other Codes and Animal Welfare Act 1992 and Nature Conservation Act 2014

A number of Codes of Practice for animal welfare have been made over time by the ACT Government. Taken together, the Codes create a matrix of animal welfare provisions that provide guidance on most of the acute animal welfare issues in the ACT. The Codes are subject to reviews and updates and additional codes may be developed as industries, technologies, attitudes and best practice animal welfare evolves.

Definitions for this Code

In this Code:

reptile means a member of the taxonomic class reptilia that is kept in captivity

keeper means a person who keeps reptiles as pets.

Overall welfare objectives

The overall objectives for the welfare and husbandry of reptiles in this Code are:

- Appropriate handling and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.
- Alleviation of sickness or suffering of reptiles in captivity.
- Responsible distribution of offspring of any reptiles bred in captivity.

Because humans can alter or control a captive animal's environment, animal welfare includes the concept that people have duties and responsibilities towards animals in their care. This means looking after the needs of the animal, and includes adult supervision of children who have reptiles as pets.

When taking on the responsibility for an animal its potential life span should be considered; for some species of reptiles this can be for decades.

New owners should obtain information about diet, accommodation, management and general health care relevant to the species they intend to keep. (Standard 1.1 of the *Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT*, excerpted at Appendix III, obliges those selling a reptile in the ACT to provide such information).

List of Mandatory Standards

Standard S1	Handling
Standard S2	Quarantine Health
Standard S3	Environment
Standard S4	Nutrition
Standard S5	Transport
Standard S6	Breeding

1. Handling

Overall welfare objective

Appropriate handling and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.

Objective during handling

Prevention of stress or injury to both reptile and handler.

Mandatory standards

S1.1 When handling reptiles the handler must use methods that minimise the hazards and risks posed to reptiles, including disease, injury and unnecessary stress.

Guidelines

G1.1 Anyone intending to handle a reptile must be aware of the hazards and risks posed by handling reptiles, including zoonotic disease (disease transferred to humans).

G1.2 Turtles and lizards should never be held upside down or placed on their back because these reptiles do not have a diaphragm and their breathing could be severely compromised.

Snakes

G1.3 When handling medium to large captive snakes support the body with both hands. Do not grab around the body with pressure or restrict the animal in any way (an exception may be made where necessary for a medical examination). An examination should be done using extreme care. Inappropriate handling methods will cause stress. A snake that feels stressed and threatened might injure itself or attempt to bite.

Small Lizards (geckos, skinks, small dragons)

G1.4 Due to their size, these animals must be handled with extreme care. The lizard should be held between your thumb, middle and pointer fingers asserting just enough pressure to secure the animal without crushing it. Species prone to tail autotomy should be handled in a manner that does not cause the animal to detach its tail. Usually this means grasping or handling the animal's body away from its tail.

Medium Lizards (e.g. bearded dragons, bluetongues)

G1.5 Medium sized reptiles can be handled in a number of different ways. Placing the lizard's head-end in the palm of one hand and gently securing the head with your thumb and forefinger on either side of the neck, just behind the ear openings, whilst supporting the body with the other hand' is an effective restraint – the reptile will feel more secure. The animal's whole body should be well supported. Caution should be

exercised, as reptiles this size are capable of delivering a severe bite and can lacerate the skin deeply.

Large Lizards (e.g. monitors, water dragons)

G1.6 Large lizards should always be handled with caution, because even a tame lizard can still deliver a painful injury with its claws if it tries to escape. One hand should be placed behind the lizard's head and the other at the base of the tail behind the back legs, supporting the body. This will minimise the chance of damage to both the handler and the animal.

Turtles

G1.7 Turtles are easily handled with two different preferred grips: hold with one hand from the rear end, or hold with two hands straddling the bridge area.

G1.8 Handling apparatus can injure and stress reptiles. It is preferable not to use handling apparatus, but, if necessary, use with extreme caution. Using gloves when handling smaller reptiles should be avoided as they make it difficult to tell how firmly the animal is being held thus risking unintentional harm.

G1.9 In general, reptiles suffer a degree of stress when handled and so they should not be handled more than is necessary. Some reptiles, such as bearded dragons and blue-tongued lizards, tend to be more tolerant of being handled. Good hygiene practices should be used when handling reptiles, such as hand washing before and after handling reptiles, because most reptiles carry *Salmonella* spp.

2. Quarantine and health

Overall welfare objective

- Appropriate handling and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.
- Alleviation of sickness or suffering of reptiles in captivity.

Objective of quarantine and health procedures

- Disease is not spread to other reptiles being held.
- Reptiles are kept in a state of good health at all times.

Mandatory standards

Quarantine

S2.1 When introducing a new reptile to a collection the keeper must:

- quarantine dragons, skinks and turtles for 30 days and snakes for at least three months,* treat illnesses and parasites as soon as they are discovered, and
- introduce the reptile to other compatible reptiles only when it has been assessed as healthy.

Health

S2.2 A reptile keeper must:

- a) Observe every reptile daily (unless in brumation) and take steps to ensure any sign of abnormal health is addressed either by veterinary treatment or changes in husbandry and hygiene practices,
- b) isolate any reptile that is showing signs of illness, and
- c) take precautions to prevent the transfer of disease.

** Quarantine standards take into account current knowledge and as understanding of current and emerging diseases improves the process could change.*

Guidelines

Quarantine

G2.1 Any reptile to be introduced to an existing collection must be closely examined for signs of parasites and disease and should initially be kept in isolation to reduce the risk of introducing parasites or pre-existing disease. During this isolation period close monitoring and good record keeping should take place. Many underlying diseases are exacerbated by a change in conditions and this initial quarantine period is a good time to find them.

G2.2 All reptiles, other than snakes, must be quarantined for a period of at least 30 days. Snakes require a minimum of 3 months in quarantine.

- G2.3 An animal that is not feeding, is losing weight or appears in to be in poor condition should not be allowed out of quarantine, but should be seen by a veterinarian who specialises in reptiles.
- G2.4 A reptile in quarantine should be regularly and thoroughly observed for changed behaviour which may indicate declining health.
- G2.5 A quarantine enclosure should have the bare minimum of cage furniture. The exact design will be governed by the species being kept. The following set-ups are recommended:
- a terrestrial species requires a paper substrate, hide box and water dish and,
 - an aquatic species requires a bare aquarium with a ramp to exit the water.
- G2.6 Quarantine enclosure furniture should be kept to a minimum and as simple as possible. The more complex the enclosure the harder it is to keep clean and the more likely that an infestation, such as mites, will occur or persist.
- G2.7 The quarantine enclosure should not be located in the same room as healthy reptiles. Strict hygiene protocols should be maintained when cleaning the quarantine enclosures.
- G2.8 Occupied quarantine enclosures should be cleaned after all enclosures housing non-quarantined healthy reptiles have been cleaned. Similarly, quarantined animals should be handled after non-quarantined healthy reptiles have been handled.
- G2.9 Any new materials being added to a quarantine enclosure should be treated in the same way as in section 3 (Environment – Substrate).

Health

To ensure the continued health of a reptile, correct housing and husbandry protocols must be followed.

- G2.10 Daily observation is the best way to establish the appearance of a healthy reptile and at the same time allows detection of changes from normal. Avoid unnecessary handling to reduce stress. Careful monitoring of specimens and the keeping of records are important tools in the recognition of problems in reptiles.
- G2.11 By collecting information daily any deterioration of a reptile's health can be quickly determined. Consideration should be given to the animal's:
- posture and attitude,
 - activity level,
 - response to stimuli including handling,
 - withdrawal reflex and the ability to right itself,
 - body condition and weight,

- state of hydration,
- appetite and dietary history, and
- abnormalities in faecal matter.

G2.12 A sick animal must be removed from the collection and placed into quarantine to reduce the risk of the spread of disease. Refer to section 2.1 (Quarantine). See Appendix II for contacts for information.

Reptile Diseases

The diseases below are some of the more common or serious diseases in reptiles.

Mites

G2.13 A mite infestation is serious and difficult to eradicate once present and animals should be quarantined until no mites have been observed for four weeks. Enclosures should also be thoroughly cleaned after a mite infestation as part of the mite life cycle is spent off the reptile. Treat for mites routinely including recently acquired reptiles in quarantine.

Internal Parasites

G2.14 There are many different forms of parasitic organism that can infect reptiles. All reptiles carry worms but worms are not considered a problem unless seen in faeces or the reptile suffers excessive weight loss. Seek veterinary advice if worms appear to be a problem.

Inclusion Body Disease (IBD)

G2.15 This disease affects pythons and was first reported in Australia in 1998. The disease is incurable, difficult to detect and fatal, and is most likely a long-term resident disease of Australia.

Paramyxovirus

G2.16 This is a fatal disease of snakes but it is more prevalent in the USA than in Australia. It causes necrotic pneumonia in affected reptiles. The disease can only be positively identified on autopsy.

Septicaemic Cutaneous Ulcerative Disease (SCUD)

G2.17 This disease is caused by a bacterial infection of a wound or as a result of poor husbandry, bad nutrition and/or dirty water, and can lead to septicaemia if not treated. This disease is preventable by adhering to good husbandry practices.

Salmonella

G2.18 This bacterium is carried by reptiles and necessitates good hygiene practices when handling reptiles. Reptiles do not usually show signs of salmonella infection and investigation need only be carried out if they develop diarrhoea. Handwashing with soap and warm water before and

after handling reptiles is essential. Salmonellosis is a zoonotic disease which can cause serious illness or death in humans.

Other bacterial diseases

G2.19 Other serious bacterial diseases, such as Coccidiosis, have been found in reptiles though these diseases are less common.

Nutritional Diseases

G2.20 Many diseases in reptiles have a basis in nutritional problems. The most commonly seen nutritional disease is Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), which can be prevented by a correct diet with good calcium supplementation and exposure to sunlight. Refer to section 4 (Nutrition).

Other Concerns

G2.21 Obesity, goitre problems (an iodine deficiency not often seen in Australian reptiles), gout (from excessive protein), renal failure, skeletal and shell deformities from rapid growth can also affect captive reptiles.

Environmental diseases

G2.22 Canker or 'mouth rot', some respiratory infections, scale rot, and blister disease are caused by excessive humidity.

3. Environment

Overall welfare objective

- Appropriate handling and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.

Objective of providing a suitable living environment

- The housing and husbandry is appropriate for the species being kept.
- Housing and husbandry practices ensure the health and well-being of the reptiles in captivity.

Mandatory standards

- S3.1 The reptile keeper must create a suitable environment for captive reptiles by providing an enclosure that:
- a) is safe, secure and disease-free,
 - b) meets the needs of the species being kept,
 - c) meets the minimum dimensions in Appendix I, and the size is increased as a reptile grows,
 - d) allows enough UV light emission for sufficient Vitamin D production to enable a reptile to absorb Calcium from its diet,
 - e) daily light cycle (day-night) is maintained, appropriate for the species being kept,
 - f) ensures heating and humidity that is correct for the species while maintaining sufficient ventilation,
 - g) has no sharp edges, or bare electrical wiring, that could harm the reptile,
 - h) has a design and location so the reptile is protected from extreme conditions and stress,
 - i) if more than one compatible reptile is housed together, is large enough to permit normal behaviour, and includes retreat areas for the reptile to hide.

Guidelines

- G3.1 Providing the correct living environment for each species being kept is essential. Inappropriate conditions will cause stress and impact the health and well-being of the reptile. Reptiles are naturally timid and require retreat areas in which to hide. They may become stressed if they cannot access a safe dark place.

Lighting

- G3.2 Lighting for reptiles held indoors must be provided to simulate a diurnal (day-night) light cycle must be maintained that is appropriate for the species being housed. Lights must not be left on constantly during the night in reptile enclosures, unless they are non-white globes intended for this purpose.

- G3.3 All reptiles require Vitamin D, which is produced in the skin of the animal when it is exposed to ultraviolet rays from the sun. This can be provided in captivity by using special lights designed for reptiles that emit UVA and UVB wavelengths promoting vitamin D3 production, Lighting equipment used in enclosures should be in full working order. Research should be undertaken and advice sought before purchasing UV lights because not all produce the correct wavelengths and some could have detrimental effects or be of no benefit to the reptile.
- G3.4 UV lights should be replaced about every 6-12 months. Records of the type of light used in each enclosure should be kept. The UV light should be no more than 30 cm from the reptile and there should be no glass between the light and the reptile. Lighting should be adjusted to daily and annual patterns to encourage natural behaviour.

Temperature

- G3.5 Different species of reptiles require different ranges of heat according to their origin. It is important for keepers to be aware of, and provide, the thermal requirements for each species they keep. For example, digestive complications will occur if the reptile does not reach its preferred body temperature. Outdoor enclosures must be designed and situated so that the reptile is provided with a temperature and humidity regime similar to that occurring in its natural range. This may involve creating a temperature gradient within the enclosure.
- G3.6 Artificial heat can be provided in an enclosure with one of the following:
- heat/basking lamps (coloured or ceramic heating bulbs) should be used during night time hours,
 - heat pads e.g. reptile specific thermostatically controlled heat pads, or cords, or
 - elevated ambient room temperature.
- G3.7 The heat source/light should be placed at one end of the enclosure and controlled by a thermostat to ensure that temperature extremes do not occur. The location of the heat source at one end creates a temperature gradient in the enclosure from warm to cool so the reptile can position itself where it is most comfortable. UV and heat lamps should preferably be located on top of the enclosure's wire mesh lid. Any lamps situated within the enclosure must be located in a wire guard to prevent reptiles burning themselves. Care should be taken to ensure a large enclosure does not have a very cold end, but rather a cooler end which is maintained at the lowest end of a reptile's preferred body temperature. All captive reptiles in the ACT should have artificial heating during the winter months and during cold periods in spring and autumn, unless the species is adapted to the cold conditions similar to that of the ACT and is undergoing brumation.

Humidity

- G3.8 Reptiles normally exist in the wild in conditions of low humidity. However, some species require higher humidity and species requirements should be understood.
- G3.9 Excessive humidity is one of the major contributing factors to diseases such as canker or 'mouth rot', respiratory infections, scale rot, and blister disease.
- G3.10 Good ventilation and placing the water bowl at the opposite end of the enclosure to the heat source will minimise humidity. Using full glass enclosures with little ventilation will promote a humid environment.

Water

- G3.11 Fresh, clean water should be supplied daily as unclean water bowls can be a source of harmful bacteria. Water should be deep enough for the reptile to bathe but not so deep that the animal may drown. Ceramic water containers with smooth, high, vertical sides should be avoided. Some reptiles require water to slough their skin.

Space

- G3.12 An enclosure must provide the reptile with sufficient space to move about freely, to express a range of natural behaviours and to avoid cage-mates. The shape of, and the space within, an enclosure should suit the species being kept. For example, if the snake is a climbing species the enclosure should be tall, whereas for species that naturally stay on the ground, a larger floor area is likely to be more important.

Substrate

- G3.13 Many different materials can be used on the floor of enclosures but the following requirements should be met. The substrate should be:
- easy to replace,
 - free from bacteria and insects, if sourced from outdoors, (unless the enclosure is outdoors),
 - large enough not to be swallowed during feeding,
 - non-toxic,
 - sterilized before use,
 - free of pesticides, and
 - kept dry.
- G3.14 An ideal substrate to use in both snake and lizard enclosures is newspaper as it is easy to maintain.
- G3.15 The method used to sterilize the substrate should be appropriate for the type of material. The type of substrate and furniture should be appropriate for the species being housed. Rocks, gravel and wood can be thoroughly washed, dried and oven baked where possible. Natural

substrate such as leaf litter can be microwaved or oven baked to remove pests. Use sand only for species where sand is part of their normal habitat.

Cleaning

- G3.16 Soiled or wet enclosure substrate should be replaced as soon as possible. Wet substrate and faeces should be removed when first seen and uneaten food, especially 'wet' foods, should be removed in a timely manner'. Spot wipe enclosure walls if soiled. Thorough cleaning of an enclosure should take place monthly for snakes, and more often for lizards and turtles.
- G3.17 Remove the reptile before cleaning an enclosure to reduce stress for the animal. Avoid the use of chemicals, but if they are used, make up to the correct dilution as stated on the container.

Community living and compatibility

- G3.18 It is not recommended to mix species in a reptile enclosure, due to the potential for aggression and competition. Same-species grouping can also be problematic and the keeper must be vigilant and aware of interactions between animals, removing problem animals when necessary.
- G3.19 Large numbers of animals will increase the chances of injuries being received during territorial or mating rituals. Housing similar species together also increases the risk of hybridisation (see section 6. Breeding – Key information). Keepers wishing to establish a community of reptiles should ensure that:
- the enclosure will be large enough to house the required number of adults of the reptile species being kept; and
 - the species are compatible.

4. Nutrition

Overall welfare objective

- Appropriate health and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.
- Alleviation of sickness or suffering of reptiles in captivity.

Objective for providing appropriate nutrition

Food provided is nutritionally balanced and suitable for the species of reptile being kept.

Mandatory standards

S4.1 The reptile keeper must:

- a) provide suitable food for the species being kept which is
 - (i) nutritionally balanced; and
 - (ii) the correct size and temperature,
- b) maintain the enclosure at the preferred body temperature at feeding times for a period that allows for complete digestion,
- c) not feed live vertebrates to reptiles*,
- d) where there is more than one reptile, monitor each animal during feeding for aggressive behaviour and for sufficient division of food, and
- e) keep accurate records of food intake, weight and the health status of the reptile.

* *Vertebrates include fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds.*

Guidelines

G4.1 Reptile species vary in their dietary requirements. For the welfare of the reptiles being kept it is essential that the reptile keeper knows and studies the dietary requirements of the species they are keeping. This information is widely available on the Internet, in literature and from herpetological societies. Care should be taken to ensure information obtained on the internet is from reliable sources.

G4.2 An important factor to take into account is the typical metabolic process in reptiles. Mammals burn most of their food to maintain their preferred body temperature. Reptiles do not do this and use behaviour, in conjunction with their environment, to increase or decrease body temperature. Consequently, reptiles require far less food than comparably sized mammals. Obesity and other problems can be brought about by a poor diet.

G4.3 In order to maintain the best conditions for correct metabolism and efficient digestion, the reptile must be kept at its preferred body temperature to eat and for long enough to digest the food. If there is a

significant drop in the reptile's preferred body temperature whilst digesting, the food can rot inside the digestive system causing peritonitis, particularly over winter months.

- G4.4 Feeding behaviour must also be taken into account. The "excitement" of the feeding frenzy should be avoided in captivity as injuries and accidental deaths in the animals can occur. If reptiles are housed together the keeper must ensure that all reptiles receive their share of the food. Hence species known for feeding frenzies (eg turtles) should be fed under controlled conditions. If necessary, they should be separated and/or provided with multiple feeding points.
- G4.5 Snakes should not be fed together as two snakes may choose the same food item which may result in one snake injuring or eating the other.
- G4.6 Whole animal bodies (vertebrates) for food are a common requirement with reptiles. These must be obtained from a legal source, and must be killed humanely. Captive reptiles should never receive live vertebrate food. A live cornered rat is as much a danger to a snake as the snake is to it. All reptiles that require whole vertebrates can be taught to take dead food.
- G4.7 Caution should be taken with smaller reptiles that are fed live crickets. Unconsumed crickets may damage reptile scales during torpor causing fungal infections.
- G4.8 Accurate records should be kept of food consumed because a reduction in the intake may indicate illness or disease. The amount of food consumed is valuable information if the reptile requires veterinary treatment. Refer to section 2.2 (Nutritional Diseases).

5. Transport

Overall welfare objective

- Appropriate handling and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.

Objective for providing safe transport

- That the transport container be safe and comfortable for the size and species of reptile being transported and have appropriate ventilation.
- That the transport container is escape-proof.

Mandatory standards

S5.1 When transporting reptiles the keeper must:

- a) use an appropriate container for the species,
- b) where animals are to be stacked, use a rigid and separate compartment for each animal ensuring air vents are unobstructed,
- c) keep all species, especially turtles, in an upright natural position so breathing is not compromised,
- d) ensure that the container is escape-proof,
- e) for snakes, properly label the container in red with the following information:
 - (i) the common and scientific name
 - (ii) the number of snakes in the container
 - (iii) correct first aid procedures
 - (iv) the name of the consignee with full contact details,
- f) arrange for the temperature throughout transport to be within the safe limits for humane transportation of the species being transported,
- g) provide water if the period of transport is to be longer than 24 hours,
- h) do not feed snakes during transport
- i) never leave containers in the sun or in a car during hot weather,
- j) have the necessary permits, and
- k) if using air freight provide an insulated transport container.

Guidelines

G5.1 Transport containers must be appropriate for the mode of transport and be escape-proof while still providing a comfortable environment for the species being transported. Containers should be free from sharp objects or loose threads that may injure the reptile.

Containers

G5.2 Turtles should be transported singly in cotton cloth sacks. If more than one turtle is placed in a bag, shell injuries are likely to result.

- G5.3 Aquatic snakes should be transported in damp open-weave hessian bags.
- G5.4 Lizards and terrestrial snakes should be transported individually in secure cloth bags. The larger goannas (monitors) should be individually accommodated in stout bags of jute, hessian or canvas, as they will easily tear lighter fabric with their powerful claws. When placing a reptile in a bag for transport always check that it is resting on the bottom of the bag before tying at the top to avoid trapping its head or tail under the tie. Transport containers should not have sharp objects or loose threads inside that may harm the reptile.

Temperature during transport

- G5.5 Maintenance of appropriate temperature levels is critical for the safe and humane transport of live reptiles. Ideal transport temperatures for reptiles vary according to species, though in general, temperature between 15 and 21 degrees Celsius is appropriate for most species.
- G5.6 Using an insulated container, such as a polystyrene "Esky", in which to put bagged reptiles can assist with temperature control. All containers should have adequate ventilation without draughts.
- G5.7 If transport is likely to take days rather than hours, animals will need to be given water, or put on a wet towel, particularly if high temperatures prevail. In extreme conditions ice may have to be placed in the insulated container with the animal but not in contact with it. Similar cooling effects can be achieved by placing wet cloth over the container so that evaporative cooling can take place.
- G5.8 Turtles should not be transported in water as they may drown. For long distance travel they can be put onto a wet towel, or for shorter travel they can be placed in a dry cotton cloth sack.

Air Freight

- G5.9 Reptiles being transported by air should be housed in secure and thermally suitable containers.
- G5.10 Licences to transport non-exempt reptiles across state borders and to other countries should be arranged well before transport takes place.

6. Breeding

Overall Welfare Objective

- Appropriate handling and husbandry for maintaining health and well-being of reptiles in captivity.
- Responsible distribution of offspring of reptiles bred in captivity.

Objectives of standards for breeding

- That accidental breeding of reptiles does not occur.
- That intentional breeding occurs only where responsible homes are available.
- The offspring of reptiles bred in captivity are provided only to responsible owners.

Mandatory standards

S6.1 Progeny of captive reptiles must:

- a) be treated in the same manner as their parents in terms of husbandry, nutrition and housing, and
- b) never be released to the wild except where release is authorised by a licence under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.

Guidelines

- G6.1 Unless reptile keepers have a licence to breed reptiles for commercial purposes, breeding should be avoided because many reptile species have multiple offspring which can result in excess or unwanted animals.
- G6.2 It is illegal under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* to abandon or release an animal from captivity, to prevent the spread of disease and to prevent the establishment of pests or hybridisation with wild individuals. Arrangements should be made to pass unwanted reptiles on to new owner(s) either privately, through a herpetological group, or through a pet shop that specialises in the trade of reptiles. If the species is subject to a licence under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* a licence to sell must be obtained prior to exchanging the reptile. In addition the buyer must have a licence to keep the reptile if it is not a species categorised under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* as 'Exempt'.
- G6.3 Some species of reptiles produce large numbers of offspring. It is recognised that, at times, there will be an excess of reptiles that require rehoming. Whether excess progeny is intentional or inadvertent the husbandry, nutrition and environmental factors in this Code of Practice should be adhered to. Deliberate or cross-breeding between species (hybridization) is not desirable because of the risk of genetic contamination of both captive and wild populations. Any species and sub-species that are capable of breeding should be housed separately.

- G6.4 Any sale of progeny following breeding, including where no payment is required, must be done in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT (other than stock and commercial scale poultry). That Code includes a requirement that the person disposing of the reptile provide the person to whom the reptile is conveyed with relevant information on its care and on any licensing requirements that apply.
- G6.5 'Exempt' reptiles are listed on the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate website.

APPENDIX I – Minimum enclosure sizes for captive reptiles

This Appendix describes the minimum enclosure dimensions for keeping reptiles by private keepers. These dimensions are for the inside of the enclosure. The enclosure dimensions are based on body length of the type of reptile being held in the enclosure. Body length for lizards and snakes is defined here as the length from the snout to the tip of the tail, and for turtles is defined here as the straight-line length of the carapace.

The minimum enclosure dimensions for keeping a single reptile are given in the table below. The dimensions in the table are also used to calculate the minimum size (floor area) for enclosures that will hold two or more individuals.

In the table, “terrestrial” refers to snakes that rarely climb (if at all), whereas “climbing” refers to snakes that commonly climb and includes pythons and tree snakes. As given in the table, enclosures for climbing snakes can either be the same dimensions as for terrestrial snakes, or the Length and Height dimensions can be swapped to provide an enclosure with more height for climbing snakes.

The dimensions for turtles given in the table are for semi-aquatic species, not for purely aquatic species. Semi-aquatic species (such as the Eastern Long-necked Turtle *Chelodina longicollis*) require two types of habitat in their enclosure: water to swim (submerge) in, and land where they can dry out. The area of terrestrial habitat in the enclosure must be of sufficient size to enable the animal(s) to be completely out of the water. The area of water must be of sufficient size for the animal(s) to completely submerge. The ‘Minimum Height’ for turtle enclosures is the height above the land. For purely aquatic species (that rarely come out of water and hence do not require an area of land in the enclosure), the minimum dimensions are: Length = B x 10, Width = B x 6, Water Depth = B x 4.

The sizes given in the table are minima, and it is recommended that, if possible, larger enclosures be used. These minimum dimensions do not apply to enclosures or containers used for immediate care of sick animals or for transportation.

Minimum dimensions:

One reptile in an enclosure

Type of reptile	Enclosure Dimensions (B = reptile's body length)		
	Minimum Length	Minimum Width	Minimum Height
Lizard	B x 3.0	B x 1.0	B x 1.0
Snake (terrestrial or climbing)	B x 0.8	B x 0.3	B x 0.3
Snakes (climbing)	B x 0.3	B x 0.3	B x 0.8
Turtle	B x 4.0	B x 2.0	B x 1.0

The dimensions given in the table are the minimum for keeping a single reptile of a certain type (lizard, snake, turtle) in an enclosure. For example, a lizard with a body length (B) of 30 cm will require an enclosure with a minimum length of $B \times 3$, so in this case Length is $30 \times 3 = 90$ cm. The minimum enclosure width is $B \times 1$, so in this case Width is $30 \times 1 = 30$ cm, and Height is $30 \times 1 = 30$ cm. In summary, the minimum internal dimensions of an enclosure housing a lizard that is 30 cm long are: Length = 90 cm, Width = 30 cm and Height = 30 cm.

Two reptiles in an enclosure

For keeping two reptiles together, the minimum floor area of the enclosure must be 50% larger than minimum enclosure size to keep one reptile (based on the body length of the longest individual). The width, length and height dimensions of the enclosure must not be less than the dimensions given in the table.

For example, the body lengths of two lizards to be housed together are 20 cm and 30 cm. From the table the minimum enclosure dimensions to keep the longest individual (30 cm) are Length $30 \times 3 = 90$ cm, Width $30 \times 1 = 30$ cm. The floor area of the enclosure is Length x Width, which is $90 \times 30 = 2700$ cm². The floor area of the new enclosure must be at least 50% larger (or 1.5 times the area), which is $1.5 \times 2700 = 4050$ cm².

Another method to calculate the extra area is to simply increase the length of one side of the enclosure by 50% (or 1.5 times as long). For example, if the minimum enclosure width is 30cm, increasing the width to 45cm ($30 \times 1.5 = 45$) will result in 50% more floor area.

More than two reptiles in an enclosure

If more than two reptiles are to be kept in the same enclosure, firstly calculate the enclosure size for two reptiles (as indicated above), then for each additional individual to be added to the enclosure add a further 20% of the minimum floor area required for a single reptile. Note that the width, length and height

dimensions of the enclosure must not be less than the dimensions given in the table.

For example, four lizards are to be housed together and the body length of the longest individual is 40 cm. The minimum enclosure dimensions to house the longest lizard are Length $40 \times 3 = 120$ cm, Width $40 \times 1 = 40$ cm, giving a floor area of Length \times Width = 4800 cm^2 . For two lizards, this minimum floor area must be increased by 50%, and for each additional individual the floor area must be increased by a further 20% of the minimum area. For four lizards, the increase in floor area will be $50\% + 20\% + 20\% = 90\%$, giving a final enclosure floor size of 4800 plus 90% of 4800, which is $4800 + 4320 = 9120 \text{ cm}^2$.

This is the same as increasing one of the sides (width or length) by 90%, or 1.9 times as long. For example increasing the minimum length from 120 cm to 228 cm ($1.9 \times 120 = 228$) will result in 90% more floor area.

APPENDIX II – Useful contacts for information regarding the care of reptiles

ACT Herpetological Society	www.actha.org.au
Canberra Reptile Zoo	(02) 6253 8533
ACT Wildlife	0432 300 033
RSPCA (ACT)	(02) 6287 8100
Wildlife Hospital - Taronga Zoo	(02) 9978 4785 (bh)
Australia Zoo	1300 369 652 (24 hours)
Healesville Sanctuary	(03) 5957 2829 (bh)

For notification of disease outbreak and information

ACT Government	13 22 81 (bh)
Wildlife Health Australia	(02) 9960 6333 (bh)

ACT Government Reptile Policy

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

(02) 6205 6376 (bh)

For information regarding licensing requirements in other Australian States and Territories

Search the relevant state legislation.

APPENDIX III – Excerpt from Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT

Sale processes

When placing an animal on the market the seller should take all reasonable steps to protect the welfare of the animal (including physical, social and emotional needs) both for the duration of the sale and into the future. The buyer of an animal should be given accurate information about:

- identification methods and requirements;
- registration requirements;
- management of reproduction including requirements for desexing;
- diet (including water requirements);
- housing;
- general health care;
- vaccination (where appropriate, including veterinarian certification);
- parasite control; and
- grooming (where appropriate).

In addition, the buyer should be made aware of the requirements for care and welfare of animals under any relevant approved code or codes of practice. A list of current codes of practice is at Appendix B; codes are available at the ACT Government website.

The seller of an animal should advise the buyer of any legislative requirements relevant to the keeping of the animal. If the seller is aware that the buyer is taking the animal out of the ACT, the seller should advise the buyer that other jurisdictions may have legislative requirements different from those in the ACT. All health records should be provided by the seller to a person purchasing an animal, at the time of purchase.

Sellers of animals should do their best to ensure that the person to whom the sale is made will take responsibility for the animal. For that reason, sale should only take place to an adult, or to a child accompanied by an adult responsible for that child.

Appropriate records should be kept by sellers of relevant matters including;

- acquisition and disposal of animals, including contact details of suppliers, breeders and receivers;
- illness and mortality;
- veterinary history (including whether the animal is desexed); and
- trading of any native or introduced species of animal that requires a permit under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*.

Sale processes - mandatory provision under section 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

- 1.1 In any sale for financial gain, the seller must provide to the buyer at no charge:
 - a) basic information in writing on the care of the animal or an Internet URL where authoritative information may be found;
 - b) any available health records relating to the animal;
 - c) written advice on the legislative provisions relating to the animal or where such information can be found; and
 - d) the Internet URL of any ACT code of practice relating to the species or type of animal, if one has been made, or hard copy of that code.
- 1.2 No animal may be sold to a person under 16.
- 1.3 Anyone selling an animal for financial gain must keep a record of the acquisition, veterinary history and sale of the animal. Records must be held for one year after sale.