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Media Contact:
Gwyn Donohue
202-452-1525, x1080
gwyn@pjjac.org

NATIONAL REPTILE AWARENESS DAY IS OCT 21: FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT REPTILE PETS

Alexandria, Va. – October 14, 2020 – In celebration of National Reptile Awareness Day on October 21, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) is spreading the word that with informed selection and proper care, reptiles such as lizards, snakes and turtles can make the perfect pet companion. Reptiles have advantages over dogs and cats—they don't bark, shed fur or scratch or chew the furniture—but they also have characteristics and care requirements that are important to know before embarking upon a reptile ownership journey.

“Over 4.5 million American households own reptile pets¹, and as more people recognize the benefits of pet companionship to help cope with social isolation and stress during the pandemic, we expect that number to grow,” said PIJAC Board Chair John Mack, owner of Reptiles by Mack in Xenia, Ohio. “We continue to urge prospective reptile owners to do careful research, and consult with experts such as reputable pet stores, before making the ownership commitment.”

There are hundreds of fascinating and unique reptile species commonly kept as pets, in a wide range of sizes, shapes and colors to fit different preferences, space limitations or other care considerations of their owners. Here are some things to think about when considering a reptile as your next pet:

1. **Legality.** While there are over 9 million pet reptiles in the United States², not every type is legal to own. Check your state and local laws to see if the specific reptile you're considering is allowed.
2. **Lifespan.** Be prepared for what may be decades of enjoyment, and responsibility. Depending on the species, in captivity lizards can live from three to 30 years, frogs for 10, and some tortoise lifespans exceed 50 years.
3. **Habitat.** Reptiles thrive in many different environments in the wild. Providing the suitable temperature, humidity and lighting that imitates that natural environment is essential for creating and maintaining a healthy habitat.
4. **Handling.** Proper handling is essential to protect both the reptile's health and your own. Like most animals, reptiles may be carriers of bacteria that can lead to illness in humans, so among other precautions, it is essential to follow equipment disinfecting guidelines

and to wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling a reptile, its food, waste or habitat.

5. **Diet.** Reptile species have a variety of specific dietary needs. Some can be fed processed pellets or fruit or vegetables, but others require a live diet like rodents for snakes, or crickets for lizards and iguanas.

One resource for researching wise pet choices is **Habitattitude.net**, an educational website sponsored by PIJAC, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The site provides proper pet selection and care guidance, including a section on reptiles that addresses basic considerations and requirements for habitat, diet and health concerns. It also describes why it is never acceptable to release pets into the wild, as some can survive outside their captive habitat, become invasive and cause environmental problems, economic damage or harm to human health.

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^{1, 2} 2019-2020 American Pet Products Association National Pet Owners Survey, www.appa.org

About PIJAC

Founded in 1971, the [Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council](#) (PIJAC) serves as the legislative and regulatory voice of the responsible pet care community, working to promote animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure the availability of healthy pets. PIJAC members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers' representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.