



North Valley Animal Disaster Group Standard Operating Guidelines

Title: EXOTIC

Objective: To give guidance when dealing with exotic species

Description:

If you are unfamiliar with any exotic species in your care, ask for support from the Small Animal Shelter Lead. Check with Small Animal Shelter Lead as needed to address any Exotics that come in without an owner.

- Exotic animals are generally considered to be those animals kept as pets that are not the commonly domesticated pets such as dogs/cats/horses/livestock
 - Birds, reptiles and some “pocket pets” would be included in this classification
- Exotic pets have physiologic requirements that are often less well known by the general public and are often quite different from the more common domesticated pets
 - Experts in the care of exotics should be consulted when dealing with exotics
 - Do not assume that any particular type of food or handling is appropriate without consulting with someone knowledgeable about the species
 - Exotic animals are often quite expensive and the mismanagement of their care- even when done with good intentions—could result in conflict with the owners
- Birds are often uniquely sensitive to toxins that may be present in disaster situations necessitating evacuation and veterinary care
 - Signs of illness in birds is often very subtle and may not show up for several days after onset. A veterinarian should be consulted at the first sign of any behavior or physical change that is noted in a bird
- Exotic pets potentially carry infectious diseases that other species are be susceptible to
 - Salmonella is not infrequently acquired by humans from handling reptiles
 - Birds can transmit some respiratory diseases to humans
 - Exotic pets should be sheltered separately from dissimilar species to avoid potential cross contamination between other pets and the exotic ones
 - Gloves and/or other PPE should be used when handling exotic pets
- Exotic pets may be more susceptible to stress induced disease from handling
 - Consult with experts on the best methods to handle the particular species

- Exotics are also often less domesticated and may resent restraint resulting in possible injuries to volunteers as well as to themselves

Companion Birds

- Large Birds: Cockatoo and Macaw
- Medium Birds: African Gray, Amazon, Conure, Pionus, and Eclectus
- Small Birds: Cockatiel, Budgies, Lories, Doves, and Finches
- Environment: Their ideal environment says between 65 to 85 degrees.
 - Birds do not tolerate drafts or dampness well
 - Be very careful on heating, air conditioning and full sun exposure
- Feed and Feeding
 - Use owner feed recommendations if possible
 - Medium and large hookbills and large parrots rely more heavily on fruits and vegetables than seeds to get their vitamin A, C and trace minerals
 - Pellets (Zupreem, Harrison's) are nutritionally balanced for birds main diet to be supplemented with fresh produce
 - Document on the Small Animal Care Schedule
- Medical: Because of their intelligence, many species of birds develop ailments when under stress
 - Feather picking or feather biting or other forms of self-mutilation can be common
 - Lack of social interaction can cause behavior issues such as territorial displays, screaming and aggressive behavior
 - By providing routine interactions and toys to investigate and explore can greatly reduce stress
 - A quite calm environment, playing jazz or classical music can sooth stressed birds
 - Notify the Small Animal Shelter Lead if you see any of the following symptoms:
 - Whole seed or undigested food in stool / droppings
 - Sitting on the floor of cage fluffed up not actively engaged in eating or play
 - Panting, wheezing, or coughing
 - Tail bobbing
 - Abdominal / visible labor breathing
 - Nasal or ocular discharge
- Cleaning: Birds are extremely sensitive to toxic fumes! For this reason, never use aerosols near birds. Document on the Small Animal Care Schedule
 - You can use 50/50 mixture of apple cider vinegar and water for general cleaning
 - Line cage trays with newspapers to reduce the amount of cleaning needed
- Zoonotic Illnesses: Depending on the symptoms and number of birds, it may be necessary to require full PPE (glove, gown, bootie, N-95 mask) for anyone working in the daily care area
 - Isolation and Quarantine
 - Set up a variety cage sizes
 - Plug in heater if appropriate. Have coverings for cages if needed
 - Monitor room temperature to keep it between 80 to 85 degrees
 - Prepare a Daily Care Cart

- Set up PPE area: gloves, gown, booties, and N-95 masks should be placed close to the door for each housing area. An additional garbage can should be placed inside the door

Most Common Companion Reptiles

- Types: Water Dragon, Russian Tortoise, Crested Gecko, Ball Python, Corn or Rat Snake, Leopard Gecko, Bearded Dragon, Chameleon, Red-Eared Slider, African Sulcata Tortoise, Eastern Box Turtles, and Green Anole
- Reptile Enclosure Essentials: The type of enclosure (arboreal, terrestrial, subterranean or aquatic) should be appropriate for the species. Arboreal species, such as green iguanas and emerald tree boas, prefer to move on a vertical plane, whereas terrestrial species, such as skinks and rat snakes, prefer a more down-to-earth, horizontal existence. Most owners bring their reptiles to the disaster shelter in their enclosures
- Temperature, lighting, humidity, moisture level and water quality profoundly impact a reptile's health and behavior
- For Long Term Housing:
 - Full-spectrum fluorescent lights, which purport to duplicate the spectral characteristics of natural sunlight, are readily available at pet stores. Those lights are deficient or completely lacking UVB radiation. This portion of the spectral band (290 to 320 nm) is essential to vitamin D3 biogenesis, which plays an essential role in calcium metabolism in reptiles
- Reptile Heating Needs
 - There are a variety of heaters that may be employed, including incandescent bulbs, infrared ceramics, heating pads or mats, warming cables, tubular heaters, radiators, convector heaters and natural sunlight radiation. Many times, the heating equipment supplied by the owner is insufficient to provide the preferred optimum temperature zone (POTZ) for the reptile
 - Inadequate heating is a common cause of immunosuppression, which is a frequent predisposing factor in many disease situations. While offering enough heat is important, you also need to place the heater at a good distance from the animal so that you prevent it from becoming burned
- Reptile Humidity Requirements
 - Humidity tends to be a function of temperature, water surface area and ventilation. The major problem in most cases is the view that ventilation must be decreased to increase humidity. Such action results in stagnant air and an increase in bacterial and fungal infections, especially in the skin and the respiratory system
 - It is better to maintain ventilation and regulate humidity by providing a greater water surface area (shallow water containers and regular spraying) or an increase in water temperature by placing a heat mat under a shallow water container
- Feed and Feeding
 - Follow all instructions list on the Small Animal Care Schedule
 - Ask Small Animal Shelter Lead if you have any food or feeding questions
- Reptile Diseases
 - Reptiles, like all other animal groups, can be responsible for disease in humans. I do not believe the risks of reptile-borne zoonoses to be any greater than for other

animal groups. Basic personal hygiene after handling a reptile reduces these risks to an acceptable level. The major potential zoonotic risks include Salmonella

- Cleaning: Ask owners to come in to clean their reptile containers if possible
 - Wash each item in a solution of hot, soapy water. Use a sponge or soft cloth to scrub away any debris. Rinse well with water before moving on to the disinfecting process. Once the reptile gear is clean, remove the contaminated water and rinse the large plastic tub

- Other Companion Species- Up flow any questions or concerns to the Small Animal Shelter Lead