

# Outreach Protocols for Living Reptiles and Amphibians

## General guidelines

- Exhibitors should have any/all permits/licenses required by NC law for possession of native reptiles and amphibians.
  - [Amphibian and Reptile Possession Permit](#)
  - [Wildlife Collection License](#)
  - [Endangered Species Permit](#)
- Keep all animals under your control.
- Avoid allowing program participants to touch the head of any animal.
- Animal welfare is an important concern during events. Rotate animals during presentations to avoid overuse and stress.
- Water bowls and cage decorations should be removed from enclosures of animals on public display, unless weather conditions require these.
- Exhibitors should disinfect hands between handling animals and program participants should be encouraged to wash their hands after touching the animals.
- Shade or cover must be provided during outside events in extreme temperatures.
- Any exhibitor in possession of a venomous reptile, large constrictor, or crocodylian must be familiar with and abide by the laws in NC General Statutes Chapter 14, Article 55.

## Amphibians

- Most amphibians do not tolerate being touched during programs; therefore, we strongly suggest amphibians only be used as display animals.
- Wild-caught amphibians are for display purposes only and should be displayed in clear containers with damp paper towels for ease of viewing.
- Dechlorinated water should be available for rehydration during events.

## Turtles

- Travel and display containers should be large enough for turtles to turn around in.
- Aquatic turtles should have access to water that is deep enough for flotation; land turtles should be provided suitable substrate in display containers.

## Lizards

- Our native lizards do not tolerate being touched during programs and can easily escape. We strongly suggest they only be display animals.
- Larger, non-native captive lizards can be handled as their owners allow.

## Snakes

- Snakes in shed or recently fed should not be handled during events.
- Small or juvenile snake handling should be limited; very small snakes are best used for display only.
- For touching, encourage program participants to use one or two fingers to gently rub in a head-to-tail direction.
- If snake displayed is a large constrictor (defined as Reticulated Python, *Python reticulatus*; Burmese Python, *Python molurus*; African Rock Python, *Python sebae*; Amethystine Python, *Morelia amethystina*; and Green Anaconda, *Eunectes murinus*; or any of their subspecies or hybrids) or is venomous, rules of Article 55 must be followed. See below for more information regarding venomous animals.

## Venomous Reptiles

- In order for venomous reptiles to be displayed, rules of Article 55 must be followed.
- Exhibitors must provide emergency contact information and a written safety protocol and escape recovery plan to event staff. This information must be kept on hand at the exhibit, must be accessible by event staff, and is required to include multiple personal contacts and bite treatment consultant contact information. Some of our recommended bite treatment consultants include: NC Poison Center (800-222-1222), Dr. Benjamin German at WakeMed Hospitals (252-258-0207 or [venomdoc@hotmail.com](mailto:venomdoc@hotmail.com)), and Miami-Dade Fire & Rescue (786-336-6600).
- We highly recommend that the enclosure used to transport a venomous reptile be the same enclosure it is displayed in during an event. If a different display enclosure is used, transfer of the animal must be made prior to the public's arrival with the full knowledge of event staff.
- Venomous reptiles must be housed in a secure, locked cage. If an aquarium is used, double screened, lockable tops are required regardless of the size of the animal.
- Under no circumstances should the enclosure of a venomous reptile be opened during an event. If soiling of the cage occurs during an event, and complaints are raised, then the cage should be removed from display.
- Venomous reptiles should never be left unattended.

## Crocodilians

- Crocodilians should be displayed in secure, locked cages when not being handled by exhibitor, and all rules of Article 55 must be followed.
- Exhibitors should maintain control of the head and tail using both hands while handling.
- Touching is allowed but never near the head.

**A direct link to NC General Statutes Chapter 14, [Article 55](#) can be found on the NCPARC web site along with downloadable venomous signs that can be used on display.**