

## Before You Buy

Reptiles and amphibians are popular pets for many reasons. However, some make poor pets because they grow large and require special cages or they become difficult to handle. Many reptiles are long-lived and require a much longer commitment for care than a dog or cat. Prior to purchasing a pet reptile or amphibian, be sure you fully understand how big it will get, how long it will live, and its current and future caging and feeding requirements. Ask yourself, “Is this the best pet for my situation, or should I consider a different one?” Unfortunately, many well-meaning pet owners choose to release their pets into the wild when they tire of the animal or are no longer able to care for it. In addition to being against state laws, releasing a pet is unethical because many of these animals die. However, some released pets ‘beat the odds’ and survive, and some even find mates and reproduce. These non-native animals can cause serious harm to the environment and our economy. If at some point you are no longer able to care for your pet reptile or amphibian, you have several options that are discussed in this brochure—releasing it is NOT one of these options. Never turn a pet reptile or amphibian loose outside!

## Helpful Resources Online

**Melissa Kaplan’s Herp Care Collection** website offers resources on herp care and behavior and lists herp societies and rescue groups.  
<http://www.anapsid.org>

**The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies** website provides a list of Fish and Wildlife Agencies by state.  
[http://www.fishwildlife.org/where\\_us.html](http://www.fishwildlife.org/where_us.html)

**AnimalShelter.org** provides a list of animal shelters by state. While these shelters may only be equipped to take mammals, they may have connections with local herp rescue groups who will be able to help.  
<http://www.animalshelter.org/shelters/states.asp>

**Reptile Network** provides a list of reptile rescuers by state—select your state and the type of animal from the drop-down list for more info.  
<http://www.rescuenetwork.org>

**The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s** Nonnative Species page has information on options for unwanted pet herps in Florida—check out their Pet Amnesty Days.  
[http://myfwc.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/Nonnative\\_index.htm](http://myfwc.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/Nonnative_index.htm)

*What to do when  
you can no longer  
care for your pet  
amphibian or  
reptile...*



Brochure produced by the  
**SEPARC Invasive Animal  
Task Team and the  
University of Florida’s  
Extension Service**

# What to do when you can no longer care for your pet amphibian or reptile...

## Keep It

If you are at your wits' end because your pet reptile is too difficult to handle, getting some advice from an expert may help. Visit Melissa Kaplan's Herp Care Collection website (see the Helpful Resources Online section) to find fact sheets with advice on dealing with behavioral problems and keeping your pet healthy.

## Return It to the Pet Store

If behavior is not an issue, and you are simply no longer able to keep your pet, contact the pet store where you purchased it. Because of the recent media attention on the problems caused by pet releases, many pet stores may be willing to take back unwanted pets, rather than risk having it set free. However, you probably won't get your money back!



Most pet stores would prefer that you return unwanted pets to the store instead of letting them loose.

## Find It a New Home

The best option for dealing with an unwanted pet (if you can't return it to the pet store) is to find it a new home. Use the resources listed in this brochure to locate reptile rescue groups, herpetological societies, and animal shelters—they will try to help you place your



Some tortoises grow very large! Your local herp society may be able to help you find a new home for these "specialty" pets.

pet in a new home. You can also post a newspaper or internet ad or post fliers at local pet stores or animal shelters. Contact local science teachers and nature centers—they may want a classroom pet.

## Contact Animal Control

Animal control agencies are usually only equipped to take mammals, but some may be able or willing to help or offer advice. However, they probably don't have a no-kill policy.

Additional copies of this brochure can be downloaded and printed by visiting [www.separc.org](http://www.separc.org) and following the link to 'products.'



## Contact Your State Fish and Wildlife Agency

While these agencies are not set up to take in unwanted pets, contacting them for advice is always better than breaking wildlife laws and risking fines by turning your unwanted pet loose outside!



Your state wildlife agency may be able to offer advice on finding your pet a new home—so that they won't have to try to catch it later!

## Euthanasia

Euthanizing a pet is never an easy choice. However, if you cannot find anyone to take your pet, you may have to consider humane euthanasia by a qualified veterinarian. You should not release a pet into the wild under any circumstances!



Green Iguanas can be difficult to handle—and even harder to place in new homes. Unfortunately, euthanasia may be the only option for these common pets.