Heating Terms Glossary: Reptiles

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There is a wealth of jargon used throughout the reptile world. This is especially true when discussing reptile heating. Learning this vocabulary allows you to better understand articles and what veterinarians, reptile hobbyists and other reptile owners are saying. The following list of terms, while in no way comprehensive, contains some of the terms used to discuss reptile heating.

Ambient temperature

The temperature of the room in which the habitat is located; air temperature; the overall temperature of the environment.

Heat rock

A product available to create hot spots within the habitat. It consists of a heating element surrounded by rock, and it is known to cause burns to reptiles. Not recommended for use. See Hot rock.

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POTR

An acronym for Preferred Optimum Temperature Range; the range of temperatures in which a reptile is safest and most comfortable.

Primary heat source

A heating device used to maintain the overall temperature of the habitat.

Rheostat

A product that allows you to adjust the amount of electricity going to more than one heating device to create and maintain proper temperatures; useful for especially warm or cool months when heating needs may change.

Secondary heat source

A heating device used to create a "hot spot" or warmer area of the habitat for basking; helps to create the temperature gradient reptiles need.

Temperature gradient

A range of warm and cooler temperatures throughout a habitat that allows reptiles to thermoregulate their body temperatures. Created by primary and secondary heat sources.

Under tank heater

A heating device that is placed beneath the habitat to maintain temperatures.

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