Humidity Requirements for Herps

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Humidity requirements for pet herps encompass a broad range. At one end, species like green iguanas, geckos, chameleons, and water dragons need a moist, tropical rainforest environment. At the other, species like the Desert Spiny Lizard and the Crevice Spiny Lizard require arid conditions.

On warm, dry summer days in the wild, for example, many herps will seek out rock crevices or deep holes where they find cooler and more humid conditions. Here they will allow the heat of the day to pass, and re-emerge to more agreeable conditions in the evening hours. Your pet's enclosure requires a similar retreat, a pocket of humidity. With access to moist and dry, and warm and cool zones, your pet can move about to self-regulate his temperature and humidity levels.

Whichever humidity level your pet requires in his enclosure, it must be monitored and maintained continuously. That's why we recommend that you practice the three M's for good health…monitor, measure, and moisturize.

Monitor

Temperature and humidity conditions in your terrarium require ongoing observation, and precise adjustment when needed. Before setting up your pet's microclimate, research and learn everything you can about the needs of your particular pet. So specific are the needs of various species, it is usually not a good idea to keep different species together in the same enclosure. Also, be sure to take into account your local climate, and the type of climate control operating in your home.

The amount of moisture in the air of the enclosure or aquarium is controlled by

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three variables: ventilation, temperature, and the introduction of water into the atmosphere. Full enclosures with small side vents conserve heat and humidity. These are best for tropical and other species with high humidity requirements. Glass and Plexiglas aquariums with wire mesh tops allow heat and humidity to more readily escape. These are best for desert and other species with low humidity requirements. Glass or fiberglass can be used with humid atmospheres, as well, but will need regular cleaning of the sides and ceiling to stop bacteria buildup and mold. If you need to maintain high humidity levels, avoid enclosures made of wood or pressboard which may rot or swell when moist. Regardless of type, always make sure all electrical connections are waterproof.

Once your pet is safe in his new home, you must monitor temperature and humidity conditions daily.

Measure

A thermometer and a hygrometer are absolutely essential for healthy herp keeping. Also, humidity levels must be adjusted by time of day, molting stage, and other factors. If humidity drops too low, your pet could experience incorrect shedding, lose a limb or his tail, or even die. If humidity is too high, your pet could suffer severe fungal infections, or even pneumonia.

Moisturize

There are many ways to maintain a proper humidity level. Choose one or more of the following to satisfy your pet's needs:

- Misters - The Habba Mist is programmable to deliver a quick mist every hour, a long mist every 12 hours, or many choices in between.
- Waterfalls - The realistic Zoo Med Naturalistic Terrarium Waterfall Kit adds moisture and enhances the appearance of any terrarium.
- Foggers - The Fogger adds moisture and ambience by simulating low clouds, fog, and dew. It is particularly useful for dew-lapping reptiles.

- Water Dishes - Pet-safe, low profile water dishes provide water for drinking and bathing and help raise humidity levels.
- Humid Hideaways - Cut an entrance in any small plastic box and line it with damp sphagnum moss to create a spot your pet will seek out again and again.
- Spray Bottle - Spray the enclosure with water at intervals. To avoid creating

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problems such as pneumonia and mouth rot, don't overdo it.

- Baths - For tolerant species, daily baths will sooth the skin.

Click here to learn more about the varied temperature and humidity requirements for herps.

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