

Cleaning Terrariums: How to Disinfect

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Many people may not make a distinction between cleaning and disinfecting, but when it comes to proper reptile care, it is very important to know the difference and do both. Cleaning involves the washing and removal of debris and other material from a surface, while disinfecting involves killing or minimizing disease-causing viruses, bacteria, or fungi. Cleaning does not mean disinfecting, and a clean surface can still harbor harmful agents.

Selecting the proper disinfectant for reptile cages must be done carefully. Disinfectants must be strong enough to kill harmful organisms but safe for your herp. It is very important to use reptile-safe products per instruction and to thoroughly rinse items after they have been disinfected.

When using chemicals for cleaning or disinfecting, keep your herp in another room to avoid exposure to fumes. Reptiles are sensitive to fumes and this applies to humans as well. For your own comfort and safety, use these products in well-ventilated rooms and be sure to use rubber gloves and safety goggles.

Before using any disinfectant, it is important to clean any soiled areas with hot soapy water first to remove food, feces, and other debris. The presence of these materials will prevent the disinfectant from working properly. Rinse well to remove any soap residue before applying the disinfectant.

The disinfectant should be applied liberally to the cage and accessories. Allow the disinfectant to have contact with the material for 10 minutes. Porous materials require longer contact time for proper disinfecting. Rinse thoroughly with clean

water after disinfecting items to remove all residues. Make sure all items are completely dry before reassembling the habitat.

Although there are many commercially available disinfectants, household bleach is one of the most inexpensive and readily available disinfectants. You can make a disinfecting bleach solution by mixing 1 part bleach to 16 parts water (or 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water). Apply this bleach solution to the cleaned cage, decorations, and accessories for 5-10 minutes, then rinse thoroughly with clean water.

Disinfecting your reptile's environment is an important and crucial part of cage maintenance. When you keep on top of your reptile's maintenance needs, you can rest assured that you are offering your pet a safe, healthy home.

WE RECOMMEND



Aquarium Cleaner/Polisher
& Wipes



Natural Chemistry Healthy
Habitat



Zoo Med Deluxe Shovel
Scooper