

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUARANTINE

Peter van Baren.

The other day I was confronted with a snake in good condition, which had suddenly died without any symptoms of illness. The animal had just changed hands.

Having examined this animal, it turned out to be a question of an infection with a *Paramyxovirus*. This is a virus that can be extant in the body of healthy animals without causing them any inconvenience (the so called carrier). This virus can "raise its head" when the animal concerned has been exposed to stress or when healthy animals, sensitive to this virus, get into contact with it.

This "get into contact with it" is rather a problem when you buy new animals. Your purchase may be healthy and get infected by the animals you already have or the new animal may infect the other animals. In the last case in particular, quarantine is very important. As the new animal is usually exposed to stress - transport and the new environment - a resurfacing of the infection often takes place and this animal will excrete viruses, it may show symptoms of illness and it may even die.

If this animal had been put with the animals in your possession right away, the death of all animals present may be the result.

The quarantine should include the following measures:

- Don't accommodate new animals in the same room as the animals already in your possession.
- Use separate equipment (tongs, etc.) for these animals.
- First you pick up / feed the animals already present, clean their cages first, then deal with the new animals.

- In the event of the alternative sequence, wash your hands properly and by preference, even change clothes.
- Clean the water basins and other things carefully and frequently. If possible make use of a disinfectant, safe for these animals. After using other disinfectants clean well and rinse thoroughly.
- Finally:- the period of quarantine should be long enough; the animals should show their "natural" behaviour and give an impression of good health. I myself think of a period of at least a month.

Hopefully the above can contribute to a successful and healthy growth of your existing collection of animals.

Translation: Peter van Baren

Corrections: Mark Wootten

COMMENTS BY THE ENGLISH CORRECTOR

Personally I would have recommended a quarantine period of 'as long as possible', I generally use 3-4 months if I need to put animals together quickly. If mixing wild caught animals and established or captive-bred, I like to leave at least a year. I know these periods may seem excessive, my experience especially with animals has proven that, despite prophylactic treatment for parasites, latent illness can arise well after 4 months.

It takes considerably longer than 4 months to establish an animal in captivity, so why expose it to unnecessary stress until it is well established. At the end of the day we have to make our own decisions. Leave as long a period as you can!

Mark Wootten,

