

Reptiles and Amphibians Living Together

Can I keep reptile and amphibians together?

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I have two green iguanas, and my son just found two toads. I wanted to know if I could reptiles and amphibians together. Please let me know if I can put reptiles and amphibians in the same tank together.

I wouldn't recommend it. Toads require a moist substrate (sand, potting soil, mixed vermiculite, etc.) for burrowing during the day and keeping moist. They are amphibians so it is very bad if their skin dries out completely. They do well at room temperatures.

Green iguanas do best with a higher temperature gradient of 85 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, with nighttime temperatures being five to 10 degrees lower. They also like higher humidity than the toads will thrive in (60 to 80 percent relative humidity). Because it is imperative that green iguanas have a large swimming area for soaking in and swimming, it is possible that toads could hop in and drown if they cannot get out again safely.

I don't recommend keeping green iguanas on the type of substrate that is best for toads because if the iguanas ingest it, it could cause gastrointestinal problems or impaction.

Toads possess toxins stored in their skin glands, which could prove quite irritating to the iguanas, should they come in contact with it. If startled or handled, toads can release toxins from the parotid glands that can irritate the eyes and other mucus membranes, and can be quite irritating if ingested by mistake.

I also have concerns about these two species possibly passing parasites between each other. I am assuming that the toads are wild-caught, yes? They can be carrying parasites from the prey items that they eat. While unlikely, if the green iguanas came in contact with toad stools (hey, I made a funny!), there is a chance that the iguanas could end up with aberrant parasites. If you had the toads examined and tested by a herp vet, and dewormed, if necessary, that could reduce the parasite load, but I still wouldn't risk it.

My last reason for not housing these two species together is because of the very different dietary requirements. As you are aware, green iguanas are herbivores, consuming just vegetation, fruits and vegetables (and maybe green iguana pellets or canned diet), and toads will eat almost any animal protein that moves (crickets, mealworms, little amphibians, little lizards, worms, snails, slugs, other insects, etc.) It could be problematic to try to offer two completely different diets for these two species.

So, I hope I have made my case to you about finding separate housing for the new toads. Amphibians, including toads, can be quite interesting and educational, as long as you are willing to provide them with the correct habitat and diet. Also, if you are currently keeping two green iguanas together that are juveniles, the time may soon come when they begin showing signs of aggression and territoriality, unless you have a huge habitat for them so that they can each establish their own territory. In many pet stores you will see a bunch of juvenile iguanas all housed together, but this is a very unnatural situation for them to be in once they begin to mature. As they mature, it is safest to either provide them with a huge habitat or to give them with separate quarters eventually. Just watch for head bobbing, or signs of one bullying the other or hogging the food, so one doesn't get the short end of the stick.

Need a Herp Vet?

If you are looking for a herp-knowledgeable veterinarian in your area, a good place to start is by checking the list of members on the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarian (ARAV) web site at www.arav.com. Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.