

Rescued Green Iguana

What should I do with a green iguana I rescued?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

I just rescued a green iguana about 3-feet long; it's so beautiful. I don't know if I am doing it any good by bringing it home in a huge animal cage. It was frozen on my sidewalk, with the temperature outside being about 40 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. I think it's so cold it froze up. I offered it parsley and mashed banana.

I do not plan on keeping it. It is a wild animal, and I respect where it came from. I just wanted to save it from the freezing cold outside.

Thank you so much for your informative Web site. Please call me, and inform me on what I should do with this amazing reptile.

It was very kind of you to rescue this iguana. However, from what you have written, I get the impression that you think that the green iguana (*Iguana iguana*) is native to Florida. It is not; however, there have been enough escapees and iguanas turned loose when they became too large for an owner to care for, that they have successfully colonized in several areas in Florida.

While I appreciate your enthusiasm and sincerity in writing to me, due to the volume of mail that I receive (both for this column and my monthly Bird Talk column, "Causes and Cures"), it is impossible for me to answer every question, and I am unable to make personal phone calls to owners with questions. For herpers needing immediate assistance with a pet reptile or amphibian, they should call a local herp veterinarian, or in your case, a local iguana rescue organization, for they should be able to provide you with the help that you require. As you can surely understand, the questions that I pick to answer in my column are those that I feel are of general interest to my readers, in order to teach them some new facet of herp medicine or care.

The first thing that you should do with your green iguana is to make an appointment with a herp veterinarian who can help you with its care. If you don't know a veterinarian who works with reptiles, you can call local pet stores and ask for a recommendation or call your dog and cat vet and ask who he or she refers reptile patients to. An iguana that has been chilled will be very susceptible to bacterial infections and may suffer from serious consequences of parasite infestation. A herp veterinarian will be able to diagnose and treat any infections and parasite problems uncovered.

A local iguana rescue group or your herp vet may be able to help you in placing your foundling once it has been returned to good health. You were a Good Samaritan in rescuing this poor, cold iguana and you are to be congratulated for wanting to do the right thing for it. I hope this information helps you.