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REPTILE LIGHT AND HEATING OPTIONS

There are a vast number of options available for heating and lighting for reptiles. The following is not an exhaustive list but hopes to clarify any confusion between the different types and what they do. Sunlight is very important for all species of reptiles. It provides:

Heat composed of infrared radiation

Light composed of visible light and Ultra Violet Light (UV)

Heat

functions are performing at optimum. Too hot and they get heat stressed, too cold and their ability to move, to digest food, perform vital functions such as fight infection etc. is compromised.

and a full spectrum of infra-red radiation so that a reptile is able to regulate their own temperature. Heat sources can be divided into those that emit shortwave radiation (near-infrared) and longer wave radiation (far-infra red). To us this feels like the difference between the warmth we feel when sitting in a beach in direct sunlight at 30°C and the warmth we feel when sitting in a room heated by radiators to 30°C. Both feel warm but in the first case, the heat penetrates deeper into our skin. In the wild, some reptiles will receive their heat by directly basking whereas others will heat up by sitting on warm surfaces once the sun has gone

, heat projectors and heat mats.

Halogen light bulbs, basking lamps or full spectrum lamps come in all sorts of varieties and colours; red, blue, black etc. We do not recommend the coloured artificial looking heat lamps as the colours serve no purpose for the reptile and may cause stress.



Ceramic heat emitters provide heat only, no light. They are cheap, do not need changing regularly and last a long time. The main advantage of these is that they can provide supplemental heat in the night time erns. There is no difference between the

black and white ceramics in relation to output. They can be used in conjunction with a halogen light bulb and UVA/UVB light for a full spectrum of heat + UVB and come in different wattages. The higher the wattage the more heat output. If you have a large open area to heat such as a tortoise table or large vivarium then get a higher wattage but no matter what wattage you are using you will need to measure the temperature with a maximum minimum digital thermometer and adjust your heating accordingly.



Light - providing a normal photoperiod of light for the species is essential even for nocturnal reptiles to replicate their normal environment. Many light bulbs are available for reptiles, all of which emit visible light (which we can see) but animals also require UV light (both UVA and UVB). UV light is not visible to humans but is visible to many other species including reptiles, birds and insects. UVA is found in some normal household lights and in full spectrum lights and is used to help animals see colours, shapes and patterns This helps them identify males and females of their species in the wild and is used to make the lighting in vivariums more natural looking.

UVB is NOT found in household or full spectrum lights and needs to be provided as a separate UVB lamp. UVB light is important for Vitamin D and calcium metabolism in many animals and helps prevent many health problems such as metabolic bone disease. UVB is filtered out by glass and plastics so is not present in sunlight coming through a glass window or vivarium glass.

Lamps producing UVB light usually also emit visible light which we can see. The visible light may look bright but the UVB will grow weaker with time and the lamp will need changing. Because we cannot see UVB, the only way to tell if a lamp is emitting UVB light is to measure it this can be done with a small, handheld UVB reader. If you do not have one of these,

advice on how far away the lamp needs to be from the reptile and how frequently it needs changing.

These come in several varieties always check whether bulbs just emit UVA or also include UVB:

Strip lights which look like fluorescent lights and can provide UV light over a large area



And compact bulbs which usually only provide UV light over a small area

All UVB lights will slowly produce less UV over time. Some need changing every 3 6 months and some every 6

unless you have a UVB reader to test for yourself. In the hospital we prefer to use Arcadia and ZooMed brands as we find them very reliable and they do not need changing as frequently as some of the other varieties. All UVB lamps work better with a reflector to direct the light towards the reptile (see below)