



# Food supplements

## Why use supplements?

The food items that are available for pet reptiles have a different nutritional composition to the food items eaten by wild reptiles. Pet reptile food items are usually too low in certain nutritional components and too high in others. It is important to supplement food appropriately to correct some of these differences in order to prevent nutritional disease occurring in pet reptiles.

## Which supplements should I use?

These are our key recommendations regarding supplementation of food for pet reptiles:

- Calcium deficiency is one of the most common nutritional problems in pet insectivorous, omnivorous and herbivorous reptiles. A calcium supplement with a high calcium to phosphorus ratio should be used at every feed for these groups of reptiles.
- Additional vitamins and minerals should be administered two to three times per week, usually in a combined multivitamin-multimineral formulation which contains preformed vitamin A as well as vitamin D3. If this combined multivitamin-multimineral formulation has a high calcium to phosphorus ratio then you don't need to use a calcium supplement on days when you use the multivitamin-multimineral formulation.
- Daily usage of combined multivitamin-multimineral supplements is not required and could result in vitamin overdose so should be avoided unless for specific treatment purposes, as advised by an exotics specialist vet.

## How should I give the supplements?

It is important to provide supplements in a suitable way so that they are effectively eaten. Dusting food items with a supplement is recommended. Adding supplements to

water is not recommended as reptiles will not take in a consistent amount of the supplement.

- Invertebrates may be dusted with a supplement by placing the invertebrates in a plastic bag then adding the required amount of supplement to the bag to coat them. The invertebrates should then be fed immediately to the reptile. Supplement powder will be lost as invertebrates move around the vivarium meaning that any invertebrates that are uneaten should be removed after 20–30 minutes (unless they will remain in a bowl, e.g. mealworms).
- Vegetation may be dusted by sprinkling the required amount of supplement on top of it, which can then be fed immediately to your reptile.
- For some species (e.g. leopard geckos), additional calcium powder can be offered in a dish left in the vivarium. For reptiles such as terrapins you can also include pieces of cuttlefish 'bone' which they will bite. Supplementation of multivitamins should not be supplied by this route and should only be dusted on food.

## Before you start using supplements for your reptile:

- Always check which vitamins and minerals your supplement contains and make sure they are suitable for your reptile.
- Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the amount of supplement to use.
- Consult your exotics specialist vet if you have questions about supplementation or if you are not sure about whether a supplement is suitable to use.