

Memorandum of Understanding

This is a memorandum of understanding between the Federation of British Herpetologists, the International Herpetological Society, The British Herpetological Society, the UK Reptile Trade Association and the RSPCA Inspectorate.

AIMS

The aim of the document is to outline a constructive relationship between us all, which reflects our mutual desire to work together to improve the welfare of reptiles in England and Wales.

1:1 The number of reptiles owned as pets in England and Wales continues to rise.

1:2 Due in part to the diverse and specialist nature of some reptiles, RSPCA Inspectors are increasingly facing challenges which they are not fully equipped to deal with.

1:3 There is a clear need and opportunity for us to co-operate to improve the:

- A. Rehabilitation of sick reptiles
- B. Re-homing of species specific reptiles to knowledgeable keepers
- C. Boarding of reptiles in appropriate environments with knowledgeable keepers
- D. Dispensing of appropriate advice and information to the public, especially at the point of sale.
- E. Development of a robust register of independent expert witnesses who are prepared to appear for both defence and prosecution sides without bias.

Initiatives

2:1 Telephone Advisors

Working together we will develop and co-ordinate a national list of experienced reptile keepers who are capable and prepared to give species specific telephone advice to members of the public, when referred to them by an RSPCA Inspector.

2:2 Carers and Re-homers

We will develop a national network of individuals who are capable and equipped to receive healthy stray or unwanted reptiles from Inspectors and Animal Collection Officers, for the purpose of re-homing. When re-homing animals we will exploit the existing network of people within the wider reptile community. No animal will re-enter the retail trade or be sold for profit. The

RSPCA will not fund this activity other than exceptionally. The RSPCA will enter into a formal agreement with each establishment.

2:3 Boarding and Rehabilitation

We will work together to develop a national network of expert keepers who, with appropriate veterinary assistance, will receive unwell animals from Inspectors, including those animals subject to pending prosecutions. The RSPCA will fund this activity at an agreed daily rate. Veterinary costs will be covered. The RSPCA will enter into a formal agreement with each establishment.

2:4 Expert Witnesses

We will aim to develop a national register of qualified experts in the field of herpetology, who are prepared to offer their independent opinion in court. These experts must be prepared to appear for both sides, embracing the true and independent nature of an expert witness. It is desirable to have experts available to cover both the clinical and husbandry aspects of herpetology. Whilst it is accepted that qualified veterinary surgeons who possess significant reptile experience are most desirable, it is acknowledged, due to the nature of the hobby, that experts may become established based on experience and therefore without formal qualification.

2:4 Public Information

We will work together to improve the information available to the public at the point of sale. In accord with the recommendations outlined in the proposed Animal Welfare Bill we will develop species specific care sheets which describe the minimum care and equipment requirements for each animal. We will seek industry sponsorship for this activity.

Signed for and on behalf of:

Federation of British Herpetologists

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International Herpetological Society

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The British Herpetological Society

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UK Reptile Trade Association

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RSPCA
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