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SUMMER/FALL  
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Pre-packaged crickets were introduced to the United States in 2002 by Timberline Live Pet Foods. Timberline allows feeder-insect customers to enjoy convenience when purchasing crickets, and pet stores the convenience of a no-maintenance feeder insect line. Bulk cricket sales are the greatest source of profit in the feeder insect section of pet stores. However, not all pet stores have the capability of maintaining feeder insects in bulk quantities.

With the introduction of the original Reptile Lunch Box, cricket maintenance and cricket buying has been made simple.

#### **The most choices available**

Timberline is now offering the original Reptile Lunch Box in cricket counts of 36. The new 36-count-cup and 24-count-cup will present feeder insect customers with more variety when fulfilling their pre-packaged cricket needs.

Timberline has been dedicated in the pursuit of offering the most choices for feeder insect customers and currently sells the Reptile Lunch Box in five different sizes. These two available counts and multiple sizes will help pet store customers make better choices when feeding their herps.

#### **Private Label available**

Adding your store's private label to high-quality Timberline crickets will assure that your customers will not soon forget the convenience of pre-packaged crickets and the name of their favorite pet store. Every time a customer makes a purchase of your private-label product they are leaving the store with a moving billboard for your business.

Your private -label Reptile Lunch Box packaging, production, warehousing, and shipping will be taken care of by Timberline. If help with design is needed, Timberline offers the services of their creative team. Your product will be shipped to you on a schedule that fits your needs, arriving to your store 100% complete and ready-to-sell.

# Beyond the Aquarium

*Follow the trends in reptile enclosures and accessories.*

BY PETRA SPIESS

There was a time when the only enclosure available to the reptile enthusiast was the aquarium. Made for fish, it could work fairly well for reptiles if used with a screen top, but its applications were somewhat limited. Similarly, there were few accessories available other than heat rocks.

Today, there is a wide variety of specialty reptile enclosures on the market, ranging from cages made for a single animal of a specific genus, to groups of cages made to house a multitude of animals from all over the reptile family tree.

Reptile enclosure accessories have also boomed, including many different types of heating and lighting products, as well as a multitude of materials for the bottom of reptile cages. Providing customers with a choice of reptile enclosures and associated supplies allows retailers to appeal to a wider variety of hobbyists.

Customers look to retailers to learn what's new, and what types of products are available. Most reptile hobbyists get started by purchasing animals from a pet store, so it's a good idea to stock a wide variety of products so you'll maintain their business as they become advanced hobbyists.



Amphibians, such as this reed frog, thrive in naturalistic vivariums.

Listed below are suggestions for reptile enclosures and accessories that mirror current trends in the hobby, and that keep those customers coming back for more.

#### **Reptile Enclosure Trends**

"Naturalistic vivariums, often including waterfalls or water areas, are continuing to become more popular. Accessories and advice for keepers interested in these are must-haves for reptile retailers," comments Colin Purcell, director of customer service at Zoo Med in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Naturalistic vivariums often combine elements of aquarium keeping with reptile keeping, such as the utilization of water pumps and filters to create waterfalls and purify water, as well as full-spectrum light bulbs and heating elements for live plants and animals in the enclosure.

One type of enclosure specifically suited for naturalistic vivariums has dual doors that open from the front, as well as a screen top and rock background for situating live plants or for creating a waterfall.

Having a beautiful, naturalistic vivarium on display in the store containing spectacular animals, such as dart frogs or day geckos, is a guarantee to sales.

Naturalistic vivarium kits—containing the enclosure, a heating source such as an undertank heat pad or underwater heater, a full-spectrum light and fixture, a small pump for a waterfall, cork bark, driftwood, and live plants, such as bromeliads for decoration, and material for the bottom of the cage—provide good ways to start out customers new to the hobby.

#### **Screen and Plastic Enclosures**

Chameleons do best in cages that have cross-ventilation. There are currently several different manufactures producing cages aimed at providing for this need: Their cages are built entirely of screen. All screen cages are the perfect enclosure for chameleons, and any store selling these an-

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## Superior Service— Premium Products

Beginning in 1953 when Richard Fluker first began to raise cricket for the south Louisiana fisherman, the Fluker family name has been associated with quality reptile food and products. Today Fluker's has expanded to become a major player in all aspects of reptile breeding and care.

### FEEDER INSECTS

With over 50 years of experience, Fluker Farms is one of the nation's largest producers of feeder insects. Fluker's currently offers bulk crickets, Hoppy Meals (pre-packaged crickets), mealworms, super worms and flightless fruit flies. For many years, Fluker Farms has worked in conjunction with entomologists at Louisiana State University to develop a superior strain of cricket. Fluker's prides itself on having the healthiest and hardiest cricket in the industry.

### REPTILES

Fluker Farms sister company, Fluker Farms International, is one of the world's leading reptile captive breeding facilities. This facility, located in El Salvador, has annually bred thousands of iguanas, tortoises, chameleons, bearded dragons and other various species, and continues to be on the forefront of reptile captive breeding.

### PRODUCTS

While other reptile product companies can only boast of research, Fluker's actually uses, develops and researches products at its El Salvador breeding facility. Fluker's currently has over 150 quality products and is one of the few companies to offer products that cover every aspect of reptile care.

The current product lineup includes pelleted diets, vitamins, health aids, heating, lighting, substrates, habitat decor and cricket food.

For more information, please call 800-735-8537 or visit our website at [www.flukerfarms.com](http://www.flukerfarms.com).



Leopard geckos are popular among hobbyists.

Zig Leszczynski

imals should provide these enclosures for their customers.

There are other alternatives to glass in reptile enclosures in addition to screen.

Available on the market now are reptile enclosures of various sizes that are molded out of one piece of polyethylene plastic, which feature built-in recesses for heat lights and easily removable glass doors.

These cages are lightweight, easy to clean, and have the unique feature of being stackable, enabling hobbyists to keep multiple animals in a compact way.

"From a retailer's perspective, stackability is a hugely overlooked key to future sales," says Scott Selstad, owner of Vision Products in Canoga Park, Calif.

In a similar vein, there are also specialty plastic cages available for arboreal snakes, such as green tree pythons (*Morelia viridis*). These cages feature perching bars that can be either plain or decorated to look like tree branches, and can also accommodate a misting system to provide the high humidity needed by most arboreal snakes.

### Rack Systems

Reptile hobbyists tend toward the obsessive; one reptile is rarely ever enough. Rack systems enable hobbyists to maintain a large number of different animals in a small area, and encourage not only the purchase of the enclosure but also the possible purchase of numerous animals, as they now have a place to put them all. Rack systems look a bit like a set of drawers containing plastic boxes of various sizes.

At the back of the drawers is a heat source, usually heat tape or heat panels, which is controlled by a thermostat in or-

der to provide the correct heat gradient.

The top of one row of drawers is usually flush with the tops of the containers below, making individual lids on each cage unnecessary. Rack systems are very popular with customers once they are introduced to them.

### Enclosure Accessory Trends

Full-spectrum fluorescent lighting is one of the best-selling reptile enclosure accessories.

"The product I sell a lot of, next to reptiles, is heating and lighting," says Char Close of Char's Reptile Store in Houston.

Heating products are also big sellers, as all reptiles require a heat source. Popular products include heat bulbs and fixtures, and undertank heat pads.

There is a huge variety of cage substrates on the market today; of particular note are the substrates made of wood pulp fiber.

These products are the best-selling substrates at the three Scales 'N Tails reptile specialty stores in the Denver area, according to general manager Rich Kensinger.

### Increasing Sales

One method of increasing sales of reptile enclosures and associated accessories involves offering bundled kits for a discounted price.

"A lot of times we'll call this a leopard gecko setup and put everything in it a leopard gecko needs, and then we knock 10 percent off the total price," Kensinger says.

Increasing sales of reptile enclosures and accessories is often as simple as informing the customer.

"The biggest thing is for the people to know about what reptiles' needs are," Kensinger says.