

Enclosure sizes for reptiles

The Federation of British Herpetologists'
recommended minimum enclosure sizes.

Sid James, FBH Committee member.

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The FBH

- Founded in 1996 to represent regional clubs and societies
- Overseeing interests of private keepers
- Aiming to counter flawed arguments of anti pet-keeping groups
- Long running involvement in government groups
- Involvement in LAIA (AAL) and other changes to legislation



Recent work of the FBH

- Response to Scottish Report on Animal Welfare
- Representation on Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC)
 - Comments regarding review of AAL
 - Input into review of DWAL
 - Leading work on positive lists
- Flash survey into kingsnake keeping in the UK
 - Response included in EU IAS list (2nd hearing – 2019)
- **Guidance on enclosure sizes**
- Survey of UK reptile keeping 2021, 2022 and 2023



Enclosure size guidance

- **Why** – self regulation, continuous improvements, available evidence, pressure from anti-animal keeping groups at government level.
- **When** – work started in 2019....assumed to be a straightforward process. Finally released in 2022.
- **How** – evidence, evidence, evidence!!! And some experts.
 - Existing guidance documents, research into special requirements (66 references)



What does the document provide

- **Recommended guidelines** (not enforceable)
- A set of enclosure sizes where the keeper can provide 'a minimum standard of wellbeing for their animal'.
- We deemed this to be larger than the sizes needed to simply keep the animal alive.
- Ultimately, bigger is better

“People can live in slums and shanty towns, but do we think they should? No, and it’s the same with our reptiles. We should always aspire to do better for them.”

Dave Hayden, Chairman of the FBH.



The recommendations

- Split by Lizards, Snakes and Chelonia - with further sub-division where needed.
- It doesn't prescribe enclosure sizes by individual species.
- Tries to differentiate between terrestrial/arboreal
- Ultimately – we want it to be flexible



The sizes

- The recommendations are given in multiples of the animal's length:
 - Snout to Vent Length for lizards, Total length for snakes, and Plastron Length for Chelonia
- For example; a lizard that is 15cm (6") SVL, that needs an enclosure that is 6x3 SVL would require a 90x45cm (3'x18") enclosure.
- Generally:
 - Lizards: 6x3x3 SVL
 - Snakes: 0.9x0.45x0.3 TL
 - Chelonia: 8x4 PL



Feedback and Limitations

- Widely endorsed
- From the FBH survey (2022):
 - 98% were aware of the FBH enclosure size guidance and 60% had read them.
 - 42% thought the guidelines were 'about right', 6% said they 'were a bit too big' and 9% said they 'were a bit too small'. Only 5% thought the guidelines were far too big (3%) or far too small (2%).
- Updates needed
- Very small + very large animals
- Next steps: updates and refinement



Where to find a copy

- On the [FBH website](http://www.thefbh.org) – www.thefbh.org
- QR code
- Printed copies (£5)



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