

Emergency Checklist for Exotic Pet Owners

When your reptile, bird, amphibian, or small mammal isn't acting like themselves, here's what to check and when it's time for the vet. This checklist is an observation guide, not a diagnosis.

3 Things to Do First in an Emergency

1

Stay calm — observe & note
Jot down when the symptom started and the last feeding/bowel-movement time — it saves time at the vet.

2

Don't force anything
Force-feeding, pulling off stuck shed, or squeezing can make injuries worse.

3

Confirm the vet can see you, then go
Call ahead to make sure that clinic actually treats your pet's species — it can save you a wasted trip.

Signs That Mean Go to the Vet Now

 **Reptile Emergency Warning Signs**

- Bones bending or legs losing strength
- Swollen toes or shedding that won't finish
- Hard, bloated belly with no bowel movement
- Can't open eyes and refusing food

 **Bird (Parrot) Emergency Warning Signs**

- Wound or bleeding where feathers were plucked
- Swollen vent (cloaca) with labored breathing
- Loss of appetite right after adoption

 **Amphibian Emergency Warning Signs**

- Red spots spreading across the skin
- Oozing skin or white, fuzzy patches
- Noticeably sluggish movement

 **Small Mammal (Rabbit/Hamster/Hedgehog) Emergency Warning Signs**

- No bowel movement
- Cheek pouch prolapse
- Stiff body or wobbling instead of moving normally

On the Way to the Vet

- For reptiles/amphibians, keep the carrier close to their usual enclosure temperature — wrap winter heat packs in a towel, placed to one side so they can't touch it directly.
 - For birds, cover the carrier with a thin cloth to keep it dark and quiet.
 - For small mammals, wrap them in a blanket/towel to prevent sudden temperature swings.
- Add a non-slip liner and a hide they can tuck into.
 - Always wrap heat/ice packs in a towel so they never touch skin directly (both low-temp burns and rapid chilling are dangerous).
 - Minimize shaking and noise, and never leave them alone in a car even briefly (especially dangerous in summer).

This checklist is a reference for observing your exotic pet's condition and deciding whether to see a vet — it does not replace veterinary diagnosis or treatment. If you notice any warning sign, don't attempt home treatment — contact a clinic that treats exotic pets right away.

[Find a verified exotic vet hospital →](#)

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