

TRANSPORTING SMALL REPTILES

When transporting small reptiles (geckos and skinks) from place to place, such as during exchanges with other keepers, care must be taken to ensure that the animals do not overheat, especially during the summer. Specimens should never be left unattended in a motor vehicle, as lethal temperatures can build up within a very short space of time.

For transporting lizards over short distances, bags made of muslin or nylon net are very convenient, and can be carried rolled up in the pocket when not in use. These can be made at home incorporating a drawstring, or the mesh bags with a zip sold for keeping underwear or stockings together in the washing machine may be used. Solid containers such as jars, ice cream containers and the like, are more inclined to overheating but may be used with care. Plastic ice cream containers, or lunch boxes and similar food storage utensils, can be modified by cutting a hole in the lid (as large as possible while still allowing the lid to be strong and stable) and gluing mesh over the hole. Silicone sealant is useful for this.

When it is found necessary to transport lizards over longer distances, they should be packed in a strong container filled with suitable material such as leaves or soft twigs, wood wool or similar. A very satisfactory method is to use a short piece of rigid plastic pipe about 60 - 80 mm in diameter. Offcuts of pipe sold for household stormwater systems are ideal. Tape plastic mesh over one end with insulation tape, put the packing material inside, then add the lizards and tape mesh over the remaining end. This provides excellent airflow and allows the animals to remain cool. This kind of packing ensures that the animals are not inadvertently squashed when sharing the inside of a motor vehicle with human occupants.

Traditionally, keepers have used the mail or couriers to transport lizards. However, New Zealand Post has changed the postal regulations and no longer accept them for carriage. Courier companies also no longer provide this service. This leaves lizard keepers with the responsibility of providing their own means of transporting stock, except for the possibility of using pet couriers who specialise in the transport of live animals.

While the comments above refer to New Zealand's native geckos and skinks, similar methods could be used for the transportation of most small exotic species that are kept and bred in this country.