

# Ambulatory Emergency Medicine



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## KEYWORDS

• Ambulatory • Emergency • Exotic animal • Avian • Reptile

## KEY POINTS

- Emergency cases in an ambulatory practice are inevitable.
- Proper emergency preparation is the key to successful case management.
- Equipment and medications required for exotic animal care may be beyond those typically carried for other domestic animal emergencies.
- Being creative and thinking outside of the box are qualities that help the veterinarian through many exotic animal emergency cases in the field.

## INTRODUCTION

While practicing exotic animal medicine as an ambulatory practitioner, veterinarians need to be prepared for the inevitable emergency call. Emergencies in exotic animal medicine come in all shapes and sizes and the veterinarian must be prepared for a variety of situations. This article provides a brief overview in managing emergency cases in an ambulatory exotics animal practice.

## THE AMBULATORY EXOTIC ANIMAL PRACTITIONER

As an ambulatory exotics veterinarian, the practitioner has the unique advantage to see many species that would be less likely to come into a stationary facility. The client who owns fish, ratites, crocodylians, or venomous reptiles may be better served by a veterinarian who can travel to the patient. Additionally, ambulatory veterinarians may be called to service larger collections (or even small zoologic parks or attractions) because this is more efficient than trying to transport large numbers to a stationary veterinary facility. In these instances, exotic animal emergencies for the ambulatory practitioner may involve a wide array of unique animal species (**Fig. 1**).

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**Fig. 1.** Local anesthetic being injected before fractured tooth extraction in an anesthetized Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) in the field.

Just as in a traditional stationary veterinary practice, having the proper preparation makes handling emergencies much easier for the ambulatory practitioner. Being prepared means having the proper training, equipment, and medications. In addition, building reliable relationships with stationary veterinary hospitals, referral centers, and emergency clinics can enhance patient care. It is advisable that ambulatory exotic animal veterinarians build a strong rapport with several clinics in their service area. If the ambulatory practitioner can establish “hospital privileges” within any of these veterinary hospitals, emergency cases that need intensive care can be properly managed, enhancing case outcome.

Exotic animal emergencies may not be initially life threatening but need immediate intervention to prevent the situation from escalating into a life-threatening event. A review of basic emergency medicine in exotic animals is essential. The author recommends the review of several references for emergency care in a variety of exotic species.<sup>1–22</sup> It is paramount that the ambulatory practitioner set appropriate expectations for the client and describe the limitations of performing emergency medicine in the field.

## EQUIPMENT

Equipment needed in emergency medicine is often the same equipment used for typical exotic animal case management (Figs. 2–4). In addition to the typical veterinary equipment, you may need a few items that are unique to emergency medicine. **Box 1** provides a list of potential equipment needs. An important aspect in many emergency situations is the ability to administer oxygen, necessitating the mobile practitioner to carry a portable oxygen delivery system. In most instances, the same portable system that the practitioner may use for anesthesia can double as an emergency oxygen delivery system. Having a variety of anesthetic face masks is needed for the various species seen by the exotic animal practitioner. Clear plastic boxes can be fitted

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