



## **CALLING ALL REPTILE KEEPERS IN THE USA: VITALLY IMPORTANT NEWS – DO NOT MISS THIS!!!**

BASKING LAMPS ARE ABOUT TO BE BANNED FROM SALE ACROSS THE WHOLE OF THE USA! This is for real. It's not a scam, it's not scaremongering. PLEASE READ THIS to find out what's happening and what you can do about it.

### **What do we mean by “Basking Lamp”?**

“Basking Lamps” are those lamps, familiar to us all, which are irreplaceable as daytime sources of basking heat, along with a small percentage of light. They are all incandescent lamps, either tungsten filament lamps or halogens. They emit some white or golden-white visible light but their main output is invisible short-wavelength infrared (IR-A), which is the predominant infrared wavelength range in sunlight. It is this that makes them ideal for use with reptiles; no other lamps have this spectrum. All “Basking Lamps” and similar infrared lamps under 125watts are about to be banned from sale in the USA, regardless of whether they are labelled for “Reptile Use Only” or not.

### **What has happened?**

As part of the nation's Energy Conservation Program, **the U.S. Department of Energy has produced a ruling, which comes into law on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024**, banning the manufacture, distribution and sale of **all inefficient light sources which come under the category of “General Service Lamps” (GSLs)** – lamps used for general lighting purposes. All low and medium-wattage incandescent lamps, including halogens, have been placed into this category since they were historically used for home lighting. They are indeed inefficient light sources – they emit at most 10% visible light, the remaining 90% being infrared. When sold as Basking Lamps, though, they are clearly not GSLs; they are low wattage infrared lamps, essential sources of short-wavelength infrared radiation for use in animal husbandry. Reptiles and amphibians rely upon irradiation from the wavelengths emitted by these lamps to maintain their core body temperature for normal bodily functions and for processes unrelated to heating, including maintenance of the immune system, setting circadian rhythms and an important stage in cutaneous vitamin D3 synthesis.

### **A serious problem.**

The problem has arisen because no special exemption for any "lamps used in animal husbandry" exists, although exemptions have been made for specialist "plant lamps", "bug lamps" and "blacklights", to name but a few. This is a serious omission. There is an exemption for “infrared lamps” if sold specifically for heating, but the definition applies only to lamps over 125watts, which excludes almost all basking lamps suitable for typical small to medium-sized vivariums. These house the majority of reptile and amphibian pets and are also used by many zoos, ex situ species conservation programs, vets and animal rescue and rehabilitation organisations. The 2023 American Pet Products Association national pet owners' survey estimated 6.0 million homes in the USA contain at least one pet reptile; their 2009-2010 survey estimated ownership of more than 13.6 million pet reptiles. This ban will create a huge animal welfare issue and could also cause widespread alarm among the general public as they find they are unable to meet their pet's needs.

### **What is being done?**

The U.S. Department of Energy are already engaging with, and receiving advice from a range of experts covering legal, scientific and welfare aspects. The Reptile Lighting Group's Research Team is fully involved and further specialist advice is being provided by top herpetologists, zookeepers and vets. Already at least one American reptile lighting company is actively working with the U.S. Department of Energy on finding a solution, which might involve, for example, creating an exemption for lamps for animal husbandry, or re-classification of our infrared lamps as falling outside of the definition of “GSL”.

### **What help is needed?**

1) The most important thing we can all do is to keep calm and avoid generating fear, panic buying, and hostile responses towards pet stores, distributors, reptile products companies or especially towards the U.S. Government.

2) If you are a U.S. Citizen, seriously consider doing two things.

a) Write to your Government Representative. Not sure who this is? Find out from here:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

b) Write to the Department of Energy, at this email address which we have been informed is specifically for the use of any U.S. Citizen wishing to comment on this issue:

[energyefficiencyenforcement@hq.doe.gov](mailto:energyefficiencyenforcement@hq.doe.gov)

Not sure what to write? See the “Helpful Hints” section below.

3) Find out more. “The Energy Conservation Program: Definitions for General Service Lamps” do not make light reading but can be found here:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2022-05-09/pdf/2022-09480.pdf> (see page 27480)

and

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-04-19/pdf/2024-07831.pdf> (see page 28962)

In these documents you can also read the background behind the program, and the enormous amount of research into costings, projected energy savings, impact assessments, stakeholders submissions, etc. that have preceded the ruling – but it would seem no representations were received from the pet trade at all, so perhaps it is not surprising that the existence of “basking lamps” went unacknowledged. Moreover, these lamps are still a “niche product” compared to the vast sales of ordinary lamps for general human use. Exemption of “reptile” lamps from the ban should have virtually no effect on energy conservation, but a huge positive effect on animal welfare.

4) SHARE this as widely as you can! Download the pdf version and ask other Groups and websites to post it up. Put it on your profile. Send it to colleagues, vets, reptile rescues, pet stores...

#### **Helpful Hints for your letters to Government Agencies.**

- It shouldn't need saying, but always be polite, avoid making any accusations, keep party politics out of it, keep your letter short and strictly on topic!
- Explain the problem clearly in your email title and first sentence or two. An opening sentence might be: “I am writing with regard to a serious problem arising from recent legislation within the Energy Conservation Program, in which low wattage incandescent lamps for heating reptiles and other exotic animals are classified as “General Service Lamps” and consequently banned from sale.”
- Explain why “basking lamps” are vital for all reptiles in captivity. Assume that the reader is unfamiliar with reptiles and amphibians so may not realise that many “cold blooded” animals rely upon “basking” under the infrared radiation from these lamps (plus suitable levels of visible light and UV) to raise their body temperatures to levels often very similar to mammals, in order to function.
- Point out that no alternatives exist which can provide a similar, sun-like spectrum in the short-wavelength infrared which is needed for the animals' health.
- Explain why low wattage basking lamps (under 125 watts) are needed as well as higher wattage infrared lamps that are already exempt.
- The MOST IMPORTANT PART: Explain in your own words how vital it is to you personally, that basking lamps in all wattages remain available to you. If you are a private keeper, briefly summarise your animals and their needs. If you work with animals, whether professionally or as a volunteer, describe your position, what you do, and why basking lamps are needed there. If you are able to write as the representative of a group, an organisation such as a reptile rescue, or a business such as a specialist reptile store, make this very clear when describing what effect a loss of basking lamps would have on you and the animals in your care.
- If you have access to genuine, true facts and figures about the reptile trade, scientific evidence relating to the importance of full spectrum lighting, infrared, reptile thermoregulation, and can cite relevant references in your letter, do so! But don't be tempted to speculate or copy chunks of material from unverifiable sources. Experts are already engaging with the DoE and will cover these issues; our task is to show the Government that there are many, many people in all walks of life who are going to be affected by this, and whose animals will be affected by this, unless something is done to remedy the situation. This is a serious welfare concern!
- Please write!
- Encourage others to write, too.

This article has been compiled by members of the Reptile Lighting Facebook Group's Research Team: Frances Baines, Quentin Dishman, Thomas Griffiths, Roman Muryn and Sarina Wunderlich.

© 2024 Reptile Lighting Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ReptileLighting>