Surviving or thriving?

Koi Carp · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/surviving-or-thriving/

One of our favourite sayings, and something we practice here at Shirley Aquatics Reptiles, is thriving over surviving. But what do we mean by this? What is thriving over surviving?

Survival is defined as the state of continuing to live or exist despite danger or difficulty. With our work alongside the RSCPA and other private specialist rescues, not to mention our own rescue and rehoming efforts, we have seen our share of survival. Metabolic bone disease, respiratory problems, fungal and bacterial infections, cuts, wounds, abrasions and some even being the victim of a physical attack, resulting in broken bones and in some cases, internal injuries.

There are in herpetoculture, businesses and breeders that place monetary value on the animals in their care above anything else. Many breeders only focusing on colours, patterns and the next big “morph”, how much any potential hatchlings may be worth in trade or profit, with the care of the animals taking a backseat to how many animals can be produced per year. The husbandry and care of these animals is basic to say the least, just involving a rack system with an often-inadequate rear heat source and a water bowl. Rack or RUB systems are, in our opinion, not appropriate for long-term care as they offer no enrichment or even allow the animal to stretch to its full length. Lighting is almost impossible to put in place, there is no height to the “enclosures”, so climbing opportunities are few and far between. This increases the potential for stress and can lead to feeding issues, muscular development problems and even neurological complications. Rack systems have a place in our hobby, don’t get me wrong, but that place is as quarantine or hatchling snake enclosures. Adult animals, of any species, should not be kept in minimalist, bare enclosures for extended periods of time.

Now, dear reader, please do not think that every business and breeder operate in this manner. There are hundreds of breeders that have the animals health and well-being at the forefront of their entire business plan. There are businesses (much like ours) that work to rescue and rehome neglected and mistreated animals, rehabilitating them to as normal a life as we can attain.

The main focus, for us as a business, is the husbandry and care of the animal and using every tool at our disposal to give the animal the opportunity to thrive, encouraging our customers to do the same and (hopefully) inspiring experienced and beginner keepers to help their animals thrive! Thriving is described as - prosperous and growing, flourishing. These words describe how (we hope) our animals are in our care. Not only surviving, but thriving, flourishing, exhibiting natural behaviours, hunting and feeding as they should, basking and bathing as they instinctively do, growing and in some cases, breeding to produce the next generation. Mimicking any species natural environment, matching humidity, UV levels, temperatures and substrates and allowing for the nature of the species to show itself. For example, taller enclosures for arboreal species, deeper appropriate substrates for burrowing species, drier set ups for arid species and so on and so forth. Understanding the animals natural history will give you a window into what environment you need to create for your chosen species.

If you, like us, wish to do the best for your chosen species of reptile, amphibian or invertebrate, and you wish to see them thrive under your care, please, feel free to contact Shirley Aquatics Reptiles at sh**********@*****co.uk or on 0121 744 1300 for more information.