

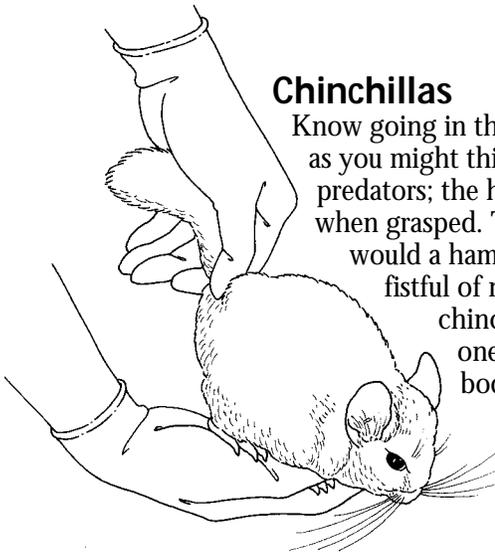
How to Handle Small Mammals and Reptiles

Even if you have only limited experience with animals, you probably know your way around a dog leash and have little trouble handling a Siamese. But odds are you have considerably less experience picking up a chinchilla or holding a hedgehog. You'll find the illustrations and text below helpful the next time you need to remove a small mammal or reptile to clean his cage or for socialization, exercise, even medical treatment.

CAUTION: *When working with exotic or other nondomestic animals it's always a good idea to wear latex gloves and a surgical mask to protect yourself from zoonoses and other diseases. Thick leather gloves will limit your dexterity and may lead you to inadvertently handle the animal roughly, possibly resulting in the animal's injury. As with all creatures, careful handling will greatly reduce your risk of being bitten.*

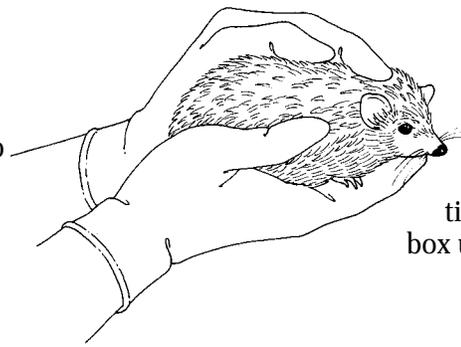
Chinchillas

Know going in that picking up a chinchilla is not as simple as you might think. A chinchilla's fur has evolved to thwart predators; the hair will break away from the animal's skin when grasped. That's why handling a chinchilla as you would a hamster or rabbit will likely leave you with a fistful of nothing but hair. So when you pick up a chinchilla, gently grasp the base of the tail with one hand and quickly support the animal's body with the other hand.



Hedgehogs

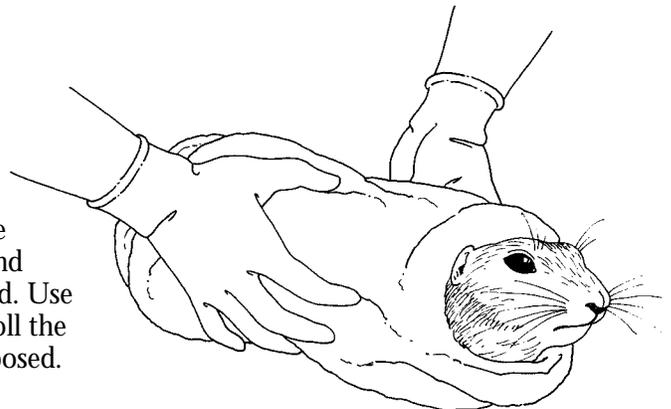
Place one hand on each side of the hedgehog and gently scoop him up as if cupping water in your hands. Then support the hedgehog with one hand while containing him with the other

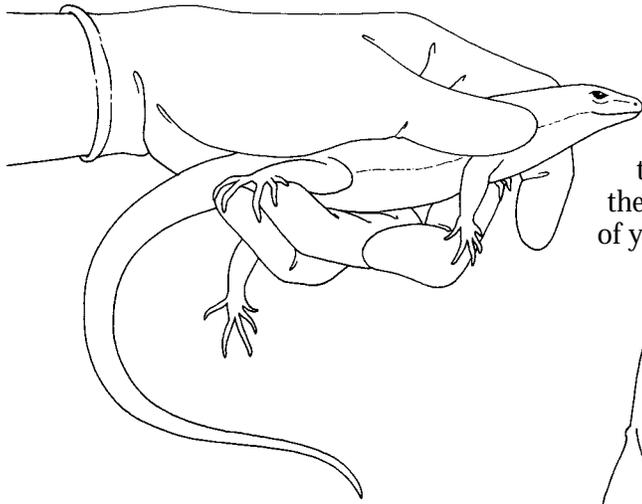


hand poised just above the back. The animal may curl into a ball, a defensive posture; if so, give him time to open up or place him in a hiding box until he's more comfortable.

Prairie Dogs

Be aware that most prairie dogs have been taken from the wild and therefore are usually difficult to handle, so you'll need to work quickly to avoid being bitten. Gently grasp the animal by the tail with one hand to avoid his dangerous teeth, and wrap a towel around his back with your other hand. Use both hands to gather the limbs, and then gently roll the animal up like a burrito, leaving only the head exposed.



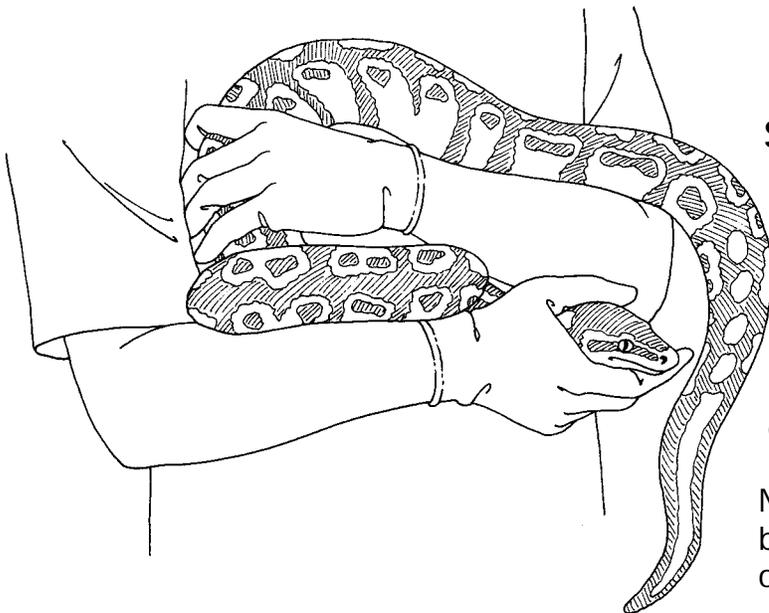
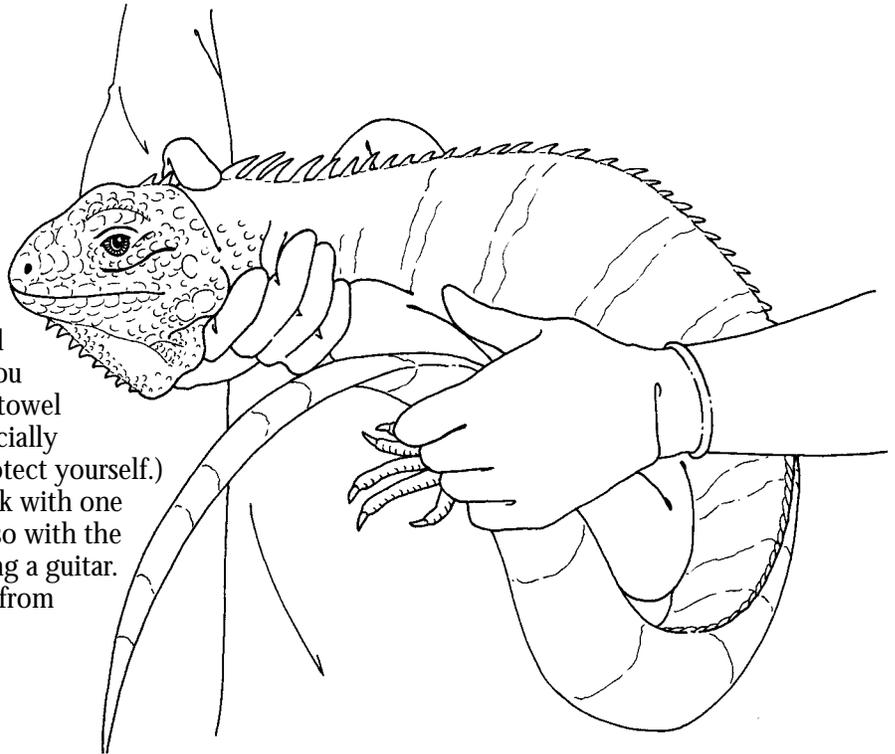


Small Lizards

Pick up a small lizard or salamander with one hand as if you were lifting a pencil from a tabletop, then quickly secure the animal by placing your thumb just behind or to the side of the animal's head. Use your index finger to support the neck from below while cradling the lizard's torso with the tips of your fingers.

Large Lizards

As with smaller lizards, you'll need to pick up the animal carefully. (You may want to begin by throwing a towel over more dangerous lizards, especially monitors, to contain them and protect yourself.) Support the animal's head and neck with one hand while lifting the animal's torso with the other, almost as if you were holding a guitar. Secure the tail to keep the animal from thrashing about.



Snakes

Lift a snake by placing one hand behind the animal's head while using the other hand to cradle the body. Gently raise the animal out of the enclosure, allowing the snake to coil about your arm for support. Very large constrictors may require two or even three handlers. When dealing with aggressive snakes, you may need to use a towel to temporarily blind the animal to your approach and to prevent any quick striking movements.

Note: Venomous snakes should only be handled by experienced individuals using snake tongs or snake hooks.