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Fiction

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## **ALLIGATORS AS PETS**

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By

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In the world of pets little consideration is given to keeping the Florida Alligator as a house pet. There are many pros and cons to be considered before you race to the nearest pet store and buy a fourteen foot alligator to keep you company in your home.

You are going to need a bathtub large enough for your new pet to submerge itself in. This of course, creates the first problem as most bathtubs are only five feet in length. A new fourteen foot long bathtub must be installed to accommodate your new pet.

Next, some arrangement must be worked out with your new pet to allow you to use the bathtub also. Bathing in the same tub with a fourteen foot long alligator is not highly recommended.

When an alligator dines, it catches its food, thrashes about wildly in what's called a death roll and lodges its meal under water for a few days to "mellow" or as we call it, "age". What is actually going on is; the alligators kill is rotting. The rotting tends to soften it, so consumption is easier.

Adequate ventilation in the bathroom is a must. The smell of the alligator's dinner mellowing in the bathtub might be offensive to those of us with a more discerning olfactory sensitivity. Simply put, it smells bad.

It is not likely that your new pet is going to jump up on your bed at night and curl up at your feet. If your pet does jump up on your bed, it is best to try to remember when the last time you fed your pet. If more than six months has elapsed, it might be best for you to exit the bed as rapidly as possible. If your wife or girl friend happens to be in there with you, tell them to hold onto the alligator while you go to the kitchen and check the feeding schedule.

With any kind of luck the situation in the bedroom will resolve itself quickly and with a minimum of screaming and yelling. Be sure to mark the calendar with a notation; the alligator has been fed this day and it will not be necessary to feed it again for another six months. Cleanup, of course, will be a chore. On the other hand, six months is more than enough time to find a new girlfriend or wife.

Walking your alligator on a leash is best accomplished only after intensive training from a very early age. A fourteen foot long alligator is going to weigh in at around five or six hundred pounds. It may be questionable who's walking whom. On the bright side, you will have little to fear from muggers. A little extra slack in the leash and the mugger will become a culinary asset

for the alligator, rather than a problem. Always be sure to mark your feeding schedule after these encounters. You don't want your pet alligator over eating and getting fat.

It is best if you train your alligator to remain on the floor. Having a six hundred pound fourteen foot long alligator bound into your lap as you watch your afternoon's TV, has been known to completely ruin an evening.

Your alligator will not need a scratching post as cats do. Likewise, they will not climb on your curtains. There is however a problem with the alligator's tail. When annoyed, the alligator flips its tail around. This is a fourteen foot long alligator and the average room is about twelve feet by twelve feet. The alligator's tail weighs in at about two hundred pounds. In the confined area of your living room, this has got to impact at least some of your furniture. Be guided by this information and furnish the rooms you intend to share with your alligator accordingly.

A note of caution: If your pet alligator begins to purr, it's probably a male alligator and the purring is his mating call. Close all your doors and windows immediately. Do not open them again until after the mating season is over.

Should the alligator appear lonely, DO NOT go out and buy a second alligator. Alligators are extremely territorial and the two will fight, unless by chance you manage to come up with a male and a female alligator.

Should you happen to obtain one of each sex, there will be a brief struggle to determine who has breeding rights with the female alligator. Although it is very unlikely, should you triumph over the male alligator and win breeding rights, a whole new set of problems will develop.

The female alligator will begin digging out a pool so she and her babies can keep moist during the dry season. These pools are usually several feet deep and cover a quarter acre or so. Ordinarily, this is no big deal unless you happen to live on the second floor of your building.

Your downstairs neighbor may take issue with you over the pool. In order to resolve your differences pleasantly, it's a good idea to invite the neighbor up to your flat for a swim in the pool. It might be best to avoid mention of the alligator being in the pool until after the neighbor is in the water. As always, the easiest resolution to any problem is often the simplest. Once peaceful relations are reestablished, don't forget to mark the feeding schedule.

Once having asserted your superiority over the male alligator, the female alligator will expect you to "perform" and fertilize her eggs. You do this by holding her under water in her pool and copulating. DO NOT make the mistake of thinking this is going to be a long term relationship. Once impregnated, the female alligator's drive is toward egg production and to facilitate this she will need to eat more often.

Next the female alligator will want to build a nest to hatch her eggs in. This is usually a pile of rotting vegetation near the side of the pool. As rotting vegetation may be sparse in your home, expect the alligator to opt for breaking your furniture into small pieces and shredding any fabric it can find. This material will be used instead of rotting vegetation. A bit more expensive, but none the less effective.

Contrary to popular belief, female alligators guard their hatchlings for the first month or so after birth. Should you or the male alligator attempt to use the room with the pool in it, the female alligator might react violently. In cases like this, it is always best to send a friend into the room first to test the female's reaction.

Litter box training is best accomplished shortly after purchase of your pet. A fourteen foot long alligator is going to require a sizeable litter box. Fortunately, like feeding, it may only

be used every six months or so depending on the age of the alligator. Younger alligators tend to eat more often and will use the litter box accordingly. Training your alligator to use the litter box is best done by example. You may of course, use force to get your point across. However, it is well to remember you are dealing with a fourteen foot long alligator when you attempt to assert yourself.

Shedding fur all over the place is not a problem with alligators except after eating. The dinner's hair tends to get stuck in the alligator's teeth. Long or short, blond or brunette, the hair must be removed quickly to prevent tooth decay and promote proper dental hygiene.

It has been determined that people who harbor fourteen foot long alligators in their homes have fifty percent fewer burglaries than people without alligators. Once the word is out on the street that there is a fourteen foot long alligator prowling about in your home, burglars will avoid your home. Even the most determined life insurance sales people will tend to contact you only by phone.

Having considered all of the above, enjoy your alligator.