

Green Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*)



Iguanas are native to Mexico, Central America, islands in the Caribbean, and South America. Free-ranging adults live in trees eating leaves and blossoms. Most pet iguanas are from “farms” in Central America and imported for the pet trade. Maximum life span is listed as 25 years, with average captive life span at least 7 years. They can reach 5-6 feet in total length with body weight of 15-18 pounds. They are sexually mature between 2-4 years of age. Adult males have a taller dorsal spine, larger dewlap, operculum scales, bilateral hemipenial bulges at the base of the tail, and large, well-developed femoral pores. Many exhibit seasonal aggression once mature. Consult your veterinarian for behavioral and health management.

Diet- (*Iguanas are 100% Herbivores*)

Leafy, Calcium-rich greens- This group should make up at least 70% to 80% of the diet: Collard, turnip, mustard and dandelion greens, chard, kale, parsley, etc. Chopped grass, alfalfa hay or pellets can be offered: pellets may need to be soaked prior to feeding. Spinach fed in small quantities occasionally as it contains high concentrations of oxalates. Almost any dark and leafy green is beneficial, but it is important to rotate them so as to avoid a

build up of oxalates and phytates that will bind calcium, and also goiterogens that will bind iodine. .

Veggies- 20% of the diet should be composed of vegetables. Yellow, red or orange veggies are preferred. Choices include sweet potato, carrot, beet, squash, red bell pepper.

Fruit- Less than 10% of diet should be composed of fruit. Fruit is very calcium poor and should only be fed on a limited basis. Choices include; melon, papaya, berries, banana, kiwi, apple.

Protein- Small amounts of low-fat **non-animal** protein (ie. Mori Nu low fat Tofu) can be offered a couple times a week but is not required.

Additionally, we highly recommend edible flowers such as dandelion, nasturtium, hibiscus, pansy, etc. Flowers are part of the wild diet of iguanas and are usually eaten readily. Iguanas seem to prefer red to purple colored flowers.

Temperature- A basking area should be provided with a temperature of 90-95° F. A cooler area in the high 70's to low 80's should be provided allowing your iguana to regulate their body temperature by moving from one area to another. Thermometers are necessary to ensure a proper temperature gradient. A “Temp Gun” can be used to read surface temperatures and is recommended. (www.reptileuv.com). Radiant heat sources (heat lamps) should be used as they provide a more natural and safer method of delivering heat than other sources. Heat rocks should **never** be used. Ceramic heat emitter bulbs are preferred as they do not emit visible light and can be left on at night after the light producing basking bulbs have been switched off.

Lighting- In addition to visible lighting, iguanas require a specific wavelength of light called UVB for their health. UVB is necessary for proper absorption of calcium. The light we recommend is the MegaRay (www.reptileuv.com). This light emits more than three times as much UVB than other commercial lights. Your UVB bulb should be left on for about 14 hours each day. Wattage should be proportional to the size of the habitat and positioning of basking area. It is important that the bulb is not filtered through glass or plastic as both of these will block the important rays from reaching your lizard. Natural sunlight is best, but we know it's sometimes rare here in the Pacific Northwest! **please note: when choosing your bulb, UVA is **not** the same as UVB.* You can bring your bulb, fixture and cage top (screen) in anytime and we can check the uvB output with our meter and give you the distance your iguana needs to reach for effective uvB.

Moisture- Iguanas come from the rain forest where humidity is near 100%. In captivity, misting the iguana 2-3 times a day will help elevate the humidity. A humidistat should be purchased to monitor the humidity in the cage. In some cases, a humidifier may be necessary to bolster humidity. Fresh water should always be available in a water dish—ideally one large enough for the iguana to submerge. Many iguanas will defecate in their water bowls making for easy cleanup but also necessitating frequent cleaning and sanitizing of the bowl.

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