

# Green Iguana Fact Page

Avian and Exotic Animal Care

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## Biological Facts

- *Iguana iguana*
- Tree dwelling lizard
- Native to Mexico and South America
- Gestation of 73-93 days
- Life span 9-12 years

## Behavior

- In the wild, most time is spent basking in the sun.
- Are solitary by nature, except during the breeding season.
- Are highly territorial and should be housed alone.
- Can become accustomed to human touching, but excessive handling may cause stress.

## Diet

- Wild diet consists mostly of leaves.
- Provide salads of clean fresh dark leafy green vegetables such as kale, escarole, endive, collard, greens, mustard greens, turnip greens and leaf lettuce (not iceberg lettuce).
- May also offer diced yellow squash, zucchini and grated carrots.
- Commercial pellets for iguanas may be used to supplement the diet.
- A phosphorus-free calcium supplement (e.g. RepCal) may be dusted over the salad greens once or twice weekly for adults, daily for juveniles.

## Housing

- Prepare a large habitat that mimics the natural environment as closely as possible.
- Provide plenty of vertical space with branches and platforms for climbing.
- A thermal gradient should be provided. The cooler side of the cage should not be cooler than 78-80°F, and the warmer side should include a basking spot where temperature reaches up to 95°F.
- Infrared lamps and ceramic heat emitters are preferred over under-the-cage heat sources and heat rocks. The latter do not heat iguanas effectively and can cause severe burns.
- Ultraviolet light in the UVB spectrum is essential. Lack of UVB radiation can result in vitamin D deficiency, inhibit calcium absorption, and result in metabolic bone disease (MBD).
- UVB lights come in two forms: fluorescent tubes and mercury vapor bulbs. Prices for these lights range from \$30-\$75. If you spent less than this, you may not have the right type of UV lamp.
- UVB lights must be placed within 12-18 inches from the lizard's basking spot. No glass or plastic should lie between the light bulb and your pet, as these filter out the beneficial rays.
- Florescent UVB bulbs loose some of their UV output over time, so you should replace your UV lights every 6-9 months.
- Newspaper or reptile carpet should be used to line the bottom of the enclosure. Bark and wood chips are not recommended, as these can be ingested and lead to intestinal blockage.
- Provide a large pan of water for soaking and to stimulate defecation.

## Preventive Care

- Routine physical examination every 6-12 months.
- Annual fecal examination for internal parasites.
- Complete blood count and chemistry profile are recommended every 1-3 years.
- Spaying and neutering can provide some behavioral and health benefits.

## Common Medical Conditions

Medical conditions commonly observed in iguanas include metabolic bone disease, abscesses, thermal burns, kidney disease, and internal and external parasites. Egg binding is common in females; prolapsed hemipenises and aggression are common problems in males. Consult a veterinarian with experience treating iguanas whenever you have questions or concerns about your pet's health.

## Biological Facts

- Inland Bearded Dragon (*Pogona vitticeps*)
- Native to rocky, semi-desert regions bordering forests in Australia.
- Diurnal (active during the day) but spend hottest part of the day in cool burrows.
- Adults can reach a total length of almost two feet.
- Color can darken considerably when threatened.
- Mature males have a broader head, thicker tail, darker black beard during breeding season, and more prominent femoral pores than females.
- In captivity, they are social animals that usually adapt well to their human caretakers.
- Captive life span can be up to 10 years.

## **Housing**

- Hatchlings should be housed separately as some may nip at each other, and some adults will eat young.
- Choose a well-ventilated, screen-topped tank that closes securely. A ten-gallon tank is fine for a baby and up to a 4 x 2 foot enclosure is suggested for adults.
- Line the bottom of the enclosure with reptile carpet, newspaper, or paper towels. Shavings, sand, corncob, and fiber pellets can cause respiratory problems due to dust, and occasionally lead to impactions if ingested.
- Provide branches or rocks for climbing and basking, and a hollow log or other “hide box”.
- Temperature gradient in the cage should range from 75-85°F, with a basking area at 90-100°F. Under tank heating pads and ceramic heat emitters are preferred to hot rocks.
- Ultraviolet light in the UVB spectrum is essential. Lack of UVB radiation can result in vitamin D deficiency, inhibit calcium absorption, and result in metabolic bone disease (MBD).
- UVB lights come in two forms: fluorescent tubes and mercury vapor bulbs. Prices for these lights range from \$30-\$75. If you spent less than this, you may not have the right type of UV lamp.
- UVB lights must be placed within 12-18 inches from the lizard’s basking spot. No glass or plastic should lie between the light bulb and your pet, as these filter out the beneficial rays.
- Florescent UVB bulbs loose some of their UV output over time; replace UVB bulbs every 6-9 months.
- Always provide a dish of clean, fresh, water for drinking and soaking. Dragons will often defecate in their water dish, so this should be cleaned daily.

## **Diet**

- Omnivorous: eat vegetables, fruits, flowers, insects, and small vertebrates
- Offer 60-65% plant foods such as mustard greens, collard greens, turnip greens, kale, dandelion greens, zucchini, sweet potato, broccoli, peas, grated carrot, etc.
- Feed 30-45% prey items such as gut-loaded crickets, superworms, waxworms, mealworms, pinky mice, and hissing cockroaches.
- Prey and other foods should be dusted with a phosphorus-free calcium supplement (e.g. RepCal) daily for juveniles, and once or twice weekly for adults.
- Though juveniles will not eat as much vegetable matter as adults, it is important to introduce these items early, so bearded dragons become accustomed to eating greens and other vegetables.

## **Common Illnesses**

- Common illnesses include intestinal parasites, anorexia, and vitamin D and calcium deficiency leading to metabolic bone disease. Traumatic wounds, egg binding, skin and jaw infections are also seen relatively frequently.
- Many problems are due to improper diet and husbandry, and are easily avoided with proper diet, husbandry, and preventive care.

## **Preventative Care**

- Bearded dragons should receive a complete physical exam every 6-12 months.
- A fecal analysis for internal parasites is recommended annually.
- Blood tests are recommended every 1-3 years.
- Talk to your veterinarian about any questions or concerns you may have about your pet.