



## CARE OF GREEN IGUANAS

The green iguana is a tree living day-light active lizard usually found at elevations below 3000ft in tropical and subtropical regions from northern Mexico to central South America. It is most often found in the vicinity of rivers and streams. They are leaf eating vegetarians.

Iguanas mate in January or February. After a pregnancy of about 2 months, the female digs in moist soil and lays 25-45 eggs. The eggs hatch after about 2 months and the baby iguanas measure 24-30cm long. They grow 15-24 cm a year and reach sexual maturity in about 3 years. Healthy adult iguanas will eventually grow up to 1.2-1.5m in length.

## DIET

The best diet is dark, leafy green vegetables with occasional, small amounts of fruit. Not all vegetables are good for iguanas as some vegetables have poor nutrient value and if fed in the long term will cause serious health problems.

Vegetables to feed in large amounts (twice daily): bok choy, romaine lettuce, collards, mustard greens, dandelion greens, carrot tops, parsley, escarole, turnip greens

Fruits and vegetables to feed in smaller amounts (1-2 pieces once daily): beans, beets, hibiscus, tomatoes, squash, courgette, mango, papaya, strawberries, figs

Calcium supplementation: Depending on the age of your iguana, he/she may need to be All the ingredients should be chopped into a size that your iguana can easily eat. Mix them thoroughly and store the mixture in the refrigerator in an air-tight container. Once or twice a day offer a small amount of this mixture after it has been liberally sprinkled with an appropriate calcium supplementation.

## CAGE

Iguanas require large cages with high humidity that are able to maintain their warmth. Since iguanas live in trees, they require a vertically shaped cage with plenty of climbing and basking surfaces. As your iguana grows, he/she will require a very large (6 ft x 6 ft) cage or an entire room

**Water:** Iguanas need a water bowl/water bath big enough for them to fit their entire body into. They use this water to bathe, drink and defecate. Make sure that the water is kept clean and is scrubbed out with soap when the iguana defecates into it.

**Humidity:** If an iguana is not kept humid enough they can have problems with their kidneys, digestive tracts and skin. Iguanas are from a very humid environment - it is ideal to keep their humidity at 80-90%. You can increase the humidity of the cage by increasing the size of the iguana's water bowl/bath or increasing the number of water bowls/baths that are offered.

**Heat - daytime:** If an iguana is not kept warm enough, they can have problems with food digestion and with their immune system. During the daytime (for 12 hours), there should be three different temperature areas set up in the tank: a hot basking area at 35-37 degrees C, a warm area at 30 degrees C and a cooler area at 24 degrees C. It is important that the iguana have access to all three temperatures during the day time. These temperatures can be obtained with the use of incandescent white lights (100-150 W depending on size of cage), red heat lamps and/or ceramic bulbs that are kept OUTSIDE of the cage. Heating pads, heat rocks and other heating elements should NEVER be placed in the cage with the iguana. Severe burns and death can occur with these items.

**Heat - night time:** The night time temperature of the cage should be kept at 24-27 degrees. These temperatures can be obtained with the use of red heat lamps and/or ceramic bulbs that are kept OUTSIDE of the cage. A timer can be used so that the daytime heat lamps (white incandescent lights) are on for 12 hours and off for 12 hours.

**UVB light:** All animals (including humans) need UVB light to get vitamin D. Vitamin D is necessary to help absorb calcium from the intestinal tract. Therefore, without UVB light exposure, your iguana will not be able to absorb any of the calcium that he/she eats. This can lead to stunted growth, poor bone quality and bone fractures. The best form of UVB light is direct sunlight. This sunlight needs to be direct and cannot be blocked by glass or plastic (windows, for example). If your iguana does not have access to direct sunlight, the next best option is a UVB bulb. These lights are usually long, thin, white lights or mercury vapour lights and need to be placed outside of the cage. The lights with the highest amount of UVB (10.0) should ideally be used. The UVB light should be placed in the basking area (area with the highest temperature) and should be no more than 18 inches (45 cm) from the iguana. As with the daytime lights, the UVB lights should be on a timer and should be on for 12 hours/day.