

CARE OF IGUANAS

The Green Iguana, (*Iguana iguana*) is a commercially bred lizard native to the coastal and inland jungles of Central and South America. In the wild, these lizards are herbivorous (meaning they are plant-eating animals) and arboreal (meaning tree-dwelling). Iguanas are ectothermic, relying on radiant heat to warm their bodies. All of these needs must be met in their captive environment. Optimum ambient temperature, adequate ultra-violet light, appropriate diet, **and** proper housing are of vital importance in maintaining a healthy pet iguana.

TEMPERATURE: As an ectotherm, all of an iguana's metabolic processes, including their immune system function, depend on maintaining the appropriate environmental temperature. The goal of heating an iguana's enclosure is to provide a gradual increase from 70 F at one end of the enclosure to 95 F at the other end. Nighttime temperatures can range from 70 F to 80 F. Substrate heaters or over-head lamps are good heat sources to raise the ambient temperature, while basking lamps are good for providing hot spots. The temperature should be monitored with thermometers at both ends of the cage. Hot-rocks are not recommended, as they are a common cause of burns.

LIGHTING: Iguanas require adequate UV spectrum light to make vitamin D and properly utilize calcium in their diet. Wild iguanas bask in direct sunlight to attain UV light, but this must be provided for captive iguanas. Recommended brands are: Zoomed Iguanalight, Zoomed Reptisun 5.0, Fluker Farms Reptasun, Hagen Reptiglo and Vita-lite. These bulbs must be replaced every 6 months. A hide spot is also a good idea to allow for escape from the light when desired. Taking your Iguana outside for 30 minutes - 1 hour daily during warm weather is helpful as well.

DIET: Iguanas are herbivores, and although they will eat other items offered, they should only be fed vegetables.

60% Mustard greens, collard greens, turnip greens, escarole, parsley, pesticide-free dandelion greens, clover, or carrot tops.

30% Squash, bell pepper, broccoli, peas, green beans, sweet potato, okra, carrots, sprouts, or alfalfa.

10% Melon, strawberry, figs, mango, papaya, kiwi, grapes, banana, tomato, or peaches.

All items should be washed and chopped finely, mixed well so that all foods are eaten, not just favorites. Vitamin supplements should be once a week. Calcium supplements should be phosphorus-free, and should be used every other feeding in adults. Hatchling Iguanas should be fed twice daily, and young (6 months to 2 years) once daily, with calcium supplemented at every feeding. Adults may be fed 2-3 times per week. Offer fresh water daily.