

Care of Uromastyx

The Uromastyx agamids have become more popular pets in the past few years. The most common among these lizards are *Uromastyx mali*. Uromastyx are found in the deserts of the Middle East. They are herbivorous (plant-eating), ground-dwelling lizards that will tunnel in the desert substrate.

TEMPERATURE: Like all reptiles, Uromastyx are ectothermic, deriving their body heat from the environment. All of a Uromastyx's metabolic processes, including immune system function, depend on the appropriate environmental temperature. The goal of heating a Uromastyx's enclosure is to provide a gradual increase from 90-94°F at one end of the enclosure to 100-100°F at the other end, using thermometers at both ends to monitor. Under tank heaters or heat lamps are recommended as a constant heat source, with a basking light used as a focal heat source for short periods of time (4-6 hours). Nighttime temperatures can drop between 70-80°F. Heat rocks are **not** recommended, as they are a common cause of burns. All heating devices should be outside of the cage, away from your Uromastyx. Humidity should be monitored as well, keeping levels as low as possible. Humidity levels at or above 50% can be harmful or deadly to a Uromastyx.

LIGHTING: Uromastyx have an absolute need for ultraviolet light in order to make vitamin D and properly utilize calcium in their diet. Fluorescent bulbs are preferred, as screw-in types do not provide sufficient UV light. Recommended brands are Repti-Sun 8.0 or Exo Terra 8.0 (these are specially formatted for desert species). These bulbs must be replaced every 6 months. Uromastyx should get 8-10 hours of UV light daily.

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

- 60% Mustard greens, collard greens, turnip greens, kale, escarole, parsley
- 30% Squash, zucchini, bell pepper, broccoli, peas, green beans, sweet potato, okra carrots, sprouts, mixed vegetables
- 10% Melon, strawberries, figs, mango, papaya, kiwi, grapes, banana, peaches, tomato

All items should be washed and chopped finely, and mixed together well so that all foods are eaten, not just favorite types. Vitamin supplements should be used once or twice monthly. Calcium supplements should be phosphorous-free, and should be used at every other feeding. Animal protein (such as crickets, mealworms, grasshoppers, and earthworms) can be offered once a week to juveniles. An open water dish is not necessary, as Uromastyx acquire their water from the fresh veggies they consume.

Yearly Health Examinations Are Recommended!!!