



## Red Headed Rock Agama Diet and Care Recommendations

### GENERAL INFORMATION

There are at least 31 species of agamas in Africa. They are widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, inhabiting savannahs and sparsely vegetated, semi-desert areas. The **Red Headed Rock Agama** (*Agama agama*) is the most common agamid kept in captivity. This species is a social, and forms groups of 10 to 20 individuals. The group is composed of a dominant male as leader with females and young males making up the rest of the group. The dominant male varies in color depending on mood, ranging from solid brown to bright blue with a red head. Females are always brown.

Adult size: 33-38cm  
Temperature: 75-90°F

### DIET

**Protein:** 80% crickets, gut-loaded with T-Rex Calcium Plus or ILF formula. Avoid mealworms and waxworms because they are high in fat.

**Vegetables:** 20% dark leafy greens and vegetables. Good choices include collard greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens, chard, kale, parsley, bok choy, bell peppers, squash, tomatoes, and carrots. Avoid spinach in large quantities. Spinach contains high concentrations of oxalates, which can inhibit the uptake of calcium by forming calcium oxalate crystals in the body. Also avoid iceberg and romaine lettuce because they have little nutritional value.

**Fruit:** Occasional. They enjoy a variety of berries, such as raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries.

### ENVIRONMENT

Agamas require more room than other similarly-sized lizards. A full-size agama should be kept in a cage that is at least 48" long (~100 gallons).

**Lighting:** The agama requires a specific wavelength of light called UVB. It is required for the proper absorption of calcium. We recommend using a full-spectrum bulb, the Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by ZooMed. It is the only brand that has been shown in an independent study to provide adequate UVB, and emits more than three times as much UVB as other commercial lights. Leave UVB bulbs on for 14 hours a day, and make sure that the bulb is not filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs need to be changed every 6 months because their effectiveness as a UVB ray emitter decreases over time.

**Heat:** Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs. The temperature gradient should be 90°F on the hot end and 75°F on the cool end. Keep a thermometer at basking level on the hot end of the enclosure, and at ground level on the cool end. Provide branches for climbing as well. Never use heat rocks or heating pads, as they can cause severe burns.

**Substrate:** Use paper-based bedding, such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News. Coconut fiber is also okay if it is allowed to dry completely after initial wetting. Providing Carefresh or coconut fiber will

allow the Red Headed Agama to burrow and tunnel in their environment. Avoid all types of sand, including calcsand. Sands can be ingested, causing blockages in the intestines.

**Moisture:** Wild Agamas live in arid, semi-desert environments. Misting is not required. Provide a large dish of water for soaking and defecating, and change the water daily.

**Furniture:** Provide plenty of branches, logs, and rocks for climbing and plenty of dark areas for hiding.

## **MEDICAL CARE**

**Exams:** Bring Red Headed Agamas in for an exam once a year for blood work and a fecal test to check for parasites. We recommend repeating fecal tests annually because Red Headed Agama are prone to parasitic infections.

### **Common Illnesses:**

**Parasitic Infections:** Common parasites found are *Coccidia* and pinworms. Symptoms include: loss of appetite, inability to gain weight, and slow growth. Treatment includes administering an oral anti-parasitic medication and repeating fecal tests.

**Impaction (Intestinal Blockage):** Almost always caused by the ingestion of sand. Symptoms include: loss of appetite and inability to produce stools. Red Headed Agamas exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away. Treatment can be difficult and often requires hospitalization. Avoiding sand will prevent this problem!

**Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism (Metabolic Bone Disease):** Caused by improper nutrition and lack of UVB lighting. Symptoms include: limb and jaw deformities, muscle twitching, lethargy, lack of appetite, and difficulty eating. Red Headed Agamas exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away.