



Chinese Water Dragon Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Chinese Water Dragon (*Physignathus cocincinus*), also known as the Asian, Thai, or Green Water Dragon, is found in the rainforests of India, Southern China, and Southeast Asia (Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar). They are diurnal (active during the day), predominantly arboreal (live in trees), and are normally found along the banks of freshwater lakes and streams. Water Dragons are excellent swimmers.

Adult size: 60-90 cm
Temperature: 70-85 F

DIET

Protein: 80% of the diet should be composed of animal protein such as insects (crickets), earthworms, and live fish. Crickets should be gut-loaded with T-Rex Calcium Plus or ILF formula. Silkworms and phoenix worms can be offered, but they are more difficult to obtain. Avoid mealworms and waxworms because they are high in fat.

Vegetables: 20% of the diet should be 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 iceberg and romaine lettuce, as they have very little nutritional value.

Fruits: Fruits can be offered occasionally as a treat. They enjoy a variety of berries, including raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries, along with melon, banana and kiwi.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Dragons grow to a very large size, and should be kept in an enclosure that provides them with plenty of space to move around and climb.

Lighting: Water Dragons require a specific wavelength of light called UVB. It is required for the proper absorption of calcium. We recommend using a full-spectrum bulb, Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by Zoomed. UVB bulbs should be kept on for 12-14 hours a day and the light should not be filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs should be replaced every 6-8 months, as the amount of UVB emitted decreases over time.

Heat: Ceramic heat emitter bulbs are recommended for heating the enclosure. The temperature gradient should be 80-85F under the basking lamp and 70-75F in the coolest part of the enclosure. Two thermometers are recommended – one for the basking area under the lamp (at the highest point the animal might reach under the lamp) and one for the coolest area. Using thermometers in this way ensures a proper temperature gradient is maintained. Some digital thermometers come with a probe on a cord that allows for temperature monitoring in two locations. Never use heat rocks or heating pads, which can cause burns.

Moisture: Water Dragons live in the rainforest where the humidity is between 60-80%. A humidity monitor should be kept in the enclosure at all times. A large dish of water should be provided for soaking and defecation. The dish should be large enough for the animal to completely submerge. Change the water daily. Place the dish on the warm end of the enclosure and mist at least 2-3 times daily to maintain high humidity in the enclosure.

Substrate: Cyprus Mulch or Coconut fiber is recommended for bedding. Paper-based products such as Carefresh or Yesterdays News can also be used.

Furniture: Water Dragons spend most of their time in trees. They must have branches for climbing provided. The branches should be various sizes, and at least as wide as the animal's body. Covered areas for hiding should be provided as well.

MEDICAL CARE

An annual exam performed by a veterinarian is recommended for proper care. Your veterinarian can advise you if any additional testing is required.