



Green Iguana

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Wild Green iguanas are found over a large geographic area, ranging from Mexico to southern Brazil and Paraguay. Green iguanas spend almost all of their time in the trees and are rarely found on the ground. They are most active during the day.

Adult size: can grow up to 6 feet and 10 lbs or more.

Temperature: 75-95°F

DIET

Vegetables: 100%, dark leafy greens and vegetables. Leafy greens should compose 90% of the diet. Good choices include collard greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens, chard, and kale. Avoid iceberg and romaine lettuce, as they have little nutritional value. Edible flowers can also be offered, including dandelion, nasturtium, and hibiscus. Flowers are part of a wild iguana's diet and are usually eaten readily. Iguanas will also eat orange vegetables, such as carrots, orange squash, and yams.

Fruit: Only offer 1-2 times a month in very small amounts.

ENVIRONMENT

Green iguanas grow to a very large size, and they need an enclosure that provides them with plenty of space to move around and climb.

Lighting: Green Iguanas require 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. 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 90-95°F on the hot end and 75-80°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. Avoid all types of sand, including calcisand. Sands can be ingested, causing blockages in the intestines.

Moisture: Green iguanas live in the rainforest where the humidity can be up to 100%. To maintain high humidity (at least 80%), mist at least 2-3 times daily. In some cases, a humidifier will be necessary to bolster humidity. To read humidity, keep a humidistat or hygrometer in the enclosure. Also provide a large dish of water for soaking and defecating. Ideally, the dish should be large enough for the iguana to completely submerge. Change the water often.

Enclosure: Green iguanas are arboreal and spend most of their time in trees. Provide plenty of branches for climbing and basking.

MEDICAL CARE

Exams: Bring green iguanas in for an exam once a year. Blood work and fecal parasite checks might be recommended by the veterinarian.

Common Illnesses:

Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism (Metabolic Bone Disease): Caused by lack of UVB lighting and poor nutrition. Commonly seen in young iguanas and egg-laying females. Symptoms include: limb and mouth deformities, lethargy, lack of appetite, and difficulty eating. Green iguanas exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away.

Bacterial Infections: Can be caused by stress or poor husbandry. Symptoms include: lethargy, decreased appetite, swellings around the mouth, or dark patches on skin. Treatments vary but usually include administering oral or injectable antibiotics.

Renal Disease: Caused by chronic dehydration and a poor diet, especially when the diet includes commercial pet food. Symptoms include: decreased appetite, lethargy, or occasional vomiting. Renal disease can be diagnosed by taking a blood panel.