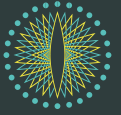


Uromastyx

All Reptiles, all the time.



Introduction

Uromastyx, often referred to as “spiny-tailed lizards,” are hardy, diurnal desert reptiles native to North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Central Asia. There are many species available in the pet trade, including Ornate, Nigerian, Moroccan, Mali, Egyptian, and Saharan Uromastyx. Although they vary in size and colour, their husbandry requirements are very similar. Unlike many pet lizards, Uromastyx are almost entirely herbivorous throughout their lives and thrive in extremely hot, dry environments. They are intelligent, active, and rewarding reptiles that can become very tame with regular interaction. Their inquisitive personalities, brilliant colours, and active daytime behaviour make them excellent display animals that often become remarkably tame with regular interaction. Although they are frequently considered beginner-friendly, their specialized heating and lighting requirements mean they are best suited for keepers who are prepared to recreate a true desert environment.

Care sheets are only to be taken as guidelines. Just as with all animals, each reptile will have unique traits & personalities special to the individual animal that may require adaptation in their husbandry & care. The following care sheet will address basic requirements but as the primary caretaker of your pet, we encourage you to take notice of your pet's behaviours and preferences and make adjustments as they grow with you & your family. Please also keep in mind that unlike mammals, most reptiles change their behaviour according to the weather seasons even if you keep them indoors all year round.



CHEAT SHEET

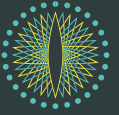
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COMMON NAME	Uromastyx (Spiny-tailed Lizard)
SCIENTIFIC NAME	<i>Uromastyx spp.</i>
NATURAL LOCATION	North Africa, Middle East, Central Asia
HABITAT (WILD)	Rocky deserts, arid scrublands, dry grasslands
CAPTIVE ENCLOSURE	40gal for juveniles, 3'x1.5'x2'+ for most adults
SUBSTRATE	ZM Repti Chips, ZM Repti Sand, Exo Terra Stone Desert, Bioactive Soil Blends, Sand/Clay Mixtures
TEMPERATURE TOLERANCE	Cooler: 80-90°F (27-32°C), Nighttime: 72-78°F (22-26°C)
BASKING TEMPERATURE	120-130°F (49-54°C)
UVB LIGHTING	Essential. 10-12 hours per day, +/-2hrs for seasonal adjustment if desired
HUMIDITY	15-30%
AVERAGE ADULT SIZE	10-18 inches (species dependent), 3 feet for Egyptians
CAPTIVE LIFESPAN	15-25+ years
FUN FACT	Their thick spiny tail is used primarily as a defensive weapon when threatened



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Housing

Enclosure: Uromastyx spend much of their day travelling between basking sites, feeding areas, and secure burrows, making floor space far more important than enclosure height. Juveniles generally do very well in a 40-gallon breeder enclosure while they are growing, but most commonly available species should eventually be upgraded into a large enclosure with plenty of burrowing space. Larger enclosures are always encouraged provided proper heating can still be maintained throughout the enclosure. We often remind keepers that simply increasing enclosure size does not automatically improve husbandry. A very large enclosure without adequate temperatures or UVB lighting is far less beneficial than a properly designed enclosure that provides appropriate heating gradients, multiple hiding places, and plenty of opportunities to bask naturally.

Substrate: Choosing the proper substrate is particularly important for Uromastyx because they naturally spend much of their lives digging or sheltering inside underground burrows. We recommend substrates that allow natural digging while also remaining stable enough to hold burrow structures. Zoo Med Repti Sand, Exo Terra Stone Desert, or naturalistic mixtures consisting of sand, excavator clay, and organic soils all work extremely well. Bioactive soil blends are also excellent options for experienced keepers looking to create a more natural enclosure. Unlike many desert reptiles, Uromastyx are not simply walking across loose sand all day. Their natural habitat consists primarily of compact soils, rocky terrain, and hardened earth. Providing opportunities for digging and burrowing offers excellent enrichment while allowing them to display many of their natural behaviours.

Temperature & Humidity: Heating is arguably the single most important aspect of Uromastyx husbandry. These lizards naturally seek out extremely hot basking surfaces that would be uncomfortable for many other reptiles. Surface basking temperatures should reach approximately 120-130°F (49-54°C), while the surrounding warm side remains around 90°F (32°C). The cooler side should remain between 80-85°F (27-29°C), with nighttime temperatures generally remaining above 72°F (22°C), but they are able to handle lower drops as long as the day time temperature is very high. Because they originate from extremely arid environments, overall enclosure humidity should remain relatively low at approximately 15-30%. Unlike tropical reptiles, routine misting is generally unnecessary. Excessive humidity should be avoided. Fresh vegetables provide much of their daily moisture requirements, while properly hydrated animals generally shed without difficulty.

Lighting: High output UVB lighting is absolutely essential for Uromastyx and should never be considered optional. Their dependence on intense sunlight in the wild means they require powerful UVB exposure in captivity to properly metabolize calcium and maintain healthy bone development. We recommend providing high quality linear UVB lighting for approximately 10-12 hours daily using reptile specific bulbs.

Heating can be provided using basking bulbs, halogen flood bulbs, ceramic heat emitters, or deep heat projectors depending on enclosure size. Larger enclosures often require multiple heating devices in order to establish an effective temperature gradient while maintaining the exceptionally high basking temperatures this species requires.

Decor: Although they are primarily terrestrial animals, Uromastyx appreciate a well furnished enclosure that allows them to move between different basking areas and secure retreats throughout the day. Large flat rocks, cork bark, sturdy branches, rock ledges, and multiple hides all provide excellent enrichment. Heavy décor should always be placed directly on the enclosure floor before adding substrate to prevent shifting while digging. A properly furnished enclosure encourages natural exploration while allowing your Uromastyx to retreat whenever it feels insecure. Like many reptiles, they are often much more confident when they know secure hiding places are always available.



Diet

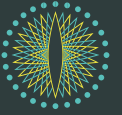
Feeding: One of the characteristics that makes Uromastyx unique is their almost entirely herbivorous diet. Unlike Bearded Dragons, which require insects throughout much of their lives, healthy adult Uromastyx obtain nearly all of their nutrition from plant material. Their diet should consist primarily of dark leafy greens including collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, dandelion greens, escarole, endive, and bok choy. Offering a wide variety of greens is always more beneficial than feeding large amounts of only one or two vegetables. Squash, green beans, bell peppers, edible flowers, and occasional lentils, split peas, and millet may also be offered as part of a varied diet. Animal protein should generally be avoided, as excessive protein has been associated with obesity and kidney disease in captive Uromastyx.

Supplementation: Calcium remains one of the most important supplements for healthy bone development. Calcium powders, cuttlebones, calcium blocks, or liquid calcium supplements may all be used successfully. When proper UVB lighting is provided, additional Vitamin D3 supplementation is generally unnecessary and excessive supplementation should always be avoided.

Water: Unique to desert species animals, a water dish does not have to be provided for healthy Uromastyx. Most individuals obtain most of their hydration from leafy greens and will very rarely drink from standing water. Unused standing water in the enclosure can lead to heavy bacterial buildup if not maintained regularly. Instead, we advise a light soaking of the animal no more than once per month for added hydration.

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Health & Maintenance

Hygiene: Spot clean the enclosure daily by removing feces and leftover food before bacteria has an opportunity to accumulate. Any food and water dishes should be cleaned frequently and substrate replaced periodically depending on the type of enclosure being maintained. Conventional enclosures generally benefit from complete substrate replacement several times per year, while well established bioactive systems may function successfully for much longer with only routine maintenance. Proper cleanliness greatly reduces the likelihood of bacterial infections, parasite buildup, and other preventable health problems.

Handling: Uromastyx are generally calm reptiles that often become remarkably tame with regular, gentle interaction. Newly acquired animals may initially be nervous and spend much of their time hiding, but patience and routine husbandry usually allow them to gain confidence over time. Rather than forcing interaction, we recommend allowing your Uromastyx to approach voluntarily whenever possible. Many individuals eventually learn to recognize their keepers and will readily approach the enclosure whenever food is expected.

Behavioural observation: Healthy Uromastyx spend much of the day basking, exploring, feeding, and moving between different areas of their enclosure.

Regular basking, a healthy appetite, bright alert eyes, and curiosity towards their surroundings are all excellent indicators of good health.

Monitor your Uromastyx for changes in appetite, persistent lethargy, swollen joints, difficulty shedding, weight loss, wheezing, or weakness in the limbs. Like many reptiles, healthy adults may naturally become somewhat less active during cooler months even when maintained indoors. Consistent body weight, strong posture, and steady daily activity are all excellent indicators of a healthy animal.

Quarantine: Quarantine any new additions to your reptile collection to prevent the spread of diseases.

