

# tropical lizard

## care sheet



Many tropical lizards change color, depending on temperature and mood. Some tropical lizards are very colorful.

### facts

average adult size:	4 to 36 inches long, depending on species
average life span:	up to 15+ years depending on species
diet:	omnivore

*Will reach adult size in 6 to 18 months, depending on species and under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your reptile grows.*



**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

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includes water dragons, long-tailed grass, emerald swift, green amieva, mountain-horned and neon tree dragons

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### diet

A well-balanced tropical lizard diet consists of:

- Provide a variety of insects, including gut-loaded (recently fed) crickets, roaches, mealworms and waxworms.
- Some species may eat frozen/thawed rodents.
- Do not use a microwave to defrost frozen/thawed rodents (offer sparingly). Do not prepare them in the same area that you prepare food. If it is unavoidable, be sure to thoroughly disinfect the area. See the Feeding Frozen/Thawed Foods Care Sheet for more information.
- Some species may eat finely grated dark, leafy green vegetables.

### feeding

Things to remember when feeding your tropical lizard:

- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times.
- Feed daily.
- Sprinkle food with calcium supplement daily and a multi-vitamin supplement once or twice a week.
- Vegetables and fruits not

eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

### housing

- Size - Appropriately sized and shaped habitat to accommodate normal behavior and exercise. Due to the varied sizes and growth rates of lizards and their individualized needs, we recommend you consult a book on this species to determine its specific housing requirements.
- Habitat - Provide a hiding area; branches for basking. Maintain greater than 60% humidity by misting as needed every day.
- Substrate - Use a mulch-type such as coconut fiber; some lizards may eat their substrate, in which case switch to something safer such as repti-carpet or an edible substrate.
- Temperature - Temperature gradient (90 to 100°F for the warm end and 75 to 80°F for the cool end). Use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source.
- Lighting - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10 to 12 hours a day is required. An incandescent

day bulb can be used for basking area if not using a ceramic heater.

- Research your specific species for compatibility recommendations and do **not** house different reptile species together.

### normal behavior

- Some tropical lizards become highly stressed when handled; regular handling is not recommended for some species. Others benefit from regular socialization and handling.
- Some water dragons rub their noses against the glass of the habitat, causing injury. A 2 to 3" background can be placed around all sides at the bottom of the habitat to discourage your water dragon from doing this.
- Never grab lizards by their tails, as they may drop them if pulled.

### habitat maintenance

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place lizard in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a

3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell; dry the tank and furnishings completely and add clean substrate.

### grooming and hygiene

- Lizards regularly shed their skin; ensure humidity of habitat is at appropriate level to allow proper shedding. To facilitate shedding, bathe in a large container that allows the lizard to immerse its entire body or provide a shed box, a hide box with sphagnum moss, that will aid in the shedding process.

### signs of a healthy animal

- Active and alert
- Clear eyes
- Body and tail are filled out
- Healthy skin
- Clear nose and vent
- Eats regularly

### red flags

- Weight loss or decreased appetite
- Mucus in mouth or nose
- Swelling
- Lethargy
- Bumps, sores or abrasions on skin
- Labored breathing
- Paralysis of limbs
- Abnormal feces

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.

### common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Gastro-intestinal disease	Runny stools, caked or smeared stool around the vent area and loss of appetite caused by bacterial or parasitic infection.	Consult your veterinarian.
Metabolic bone/vitamin deficiency	Inability to absorb calcium due to insufficient UVB light, or improper calcium/vitamin D. If untreated, can lead to a disorder characterized by deformities and softened bones. Swollen limbs and lethargy.	Consult your veterinarian and provide ample UVB lighting and proper calcium/vitamin supplements.
Respiratory disease	Labored breathing and mucus in the mouth or nose. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.	Consult your veterinarian and ensure habitat is the proper temperature.

## shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized habitat
- Substrate
- Moss
- Food and water dishes
- Mealworm dish
- Hideaway place
- Climbing décor
- Plants
- Heat light
- Heat fixture
- Under-tank heater (optional)
- UVB lighting and fixture
- Vitamin supplement
- Calcium supplement
- Cricket keeper
- Cricket food
- Cricket quencher
- Thermometer
- Humidity gauge
- Book about tropical lizards

## sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on tropical lizards and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all reptiles are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your reptile or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for reptiles and should consider not having a reptile as a pet.

Go to [cdc.gov/healthypets](http://cdc.gov/healthypets) and [petco.com/caresheet](http://petco.com/caresheet) for more information about small animals and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to [petco.com](http://petco.com) for more information.

