

# tropical skink

## care sheet



Blue-tongued skinks are friendly, docile lizards with a bright blue tongue. They are personable and enjoy frequent interaction with their pet parent.

### facts

average adult size:	up to 18 inches long, depending on species
average life span:	up to 15+ years with proper care depending on species
diet:	blue-tongues - omnivore; African fire skink- carnivore

*Will reach adult size in 1 to 3 years, 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.

## diet

A well-balanced tropical skink diet consists of:

- Blue-tongued species are omnivores and eat 60% plant matter, such as leafy green vegetables and bell peppers, and 40% insects, including gut-loaded (recently fed) crickets, roaches and mealworms.

- African fire skinks are carnivores and eat a variety of insects including gut-loaded (recently fed) crickets, roaches, waxworms and mealworms. An occasional frozen/thawed pinkie may be given as a treat.

## feeding

Things to remember when feeding your tropical skink:

- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times.
- Feed daily.
- Feed juveniles daily, adults every other day.
- 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.
- Habitat - Provide a hiding area and 2 to 3" of substrate for skink to burrow in. Maintain greater than 70% humidity by misting as needed every day.
- Substrate - Use a mulch type such as coconut fiber or reptile bark.
- Temperature - Daytime temperature gradient (95°F for the warm end and 85°F for the cool end) nighttime temperature of 70 to 75°F. 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 during daylight hours only; can use a ceramic heater or nocturnal or red incandescent all hours.
- House adult male skinks separately and do **not** house different reptile species together. May be

able to house male/female pair together.

## normal behavior

- Most tropical skinks are semi-nocturnal and will spend a portion of daylight hours hiding.
- Skinks are not naturally tame; significant time must be spent with them to maintain ability to handle them, but once tame, some enjoy frequent interaction.
- Skinks have a powerful bite if highly stressed or untamed.

## habitat maintenance

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place skink 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

- Skinks 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 skink 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 skinks

## sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on tropical skinks 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.

