

## Basic Information on Iguanas

Green iguanas, *Iguana iguana*, can be found in warm tropical rain forests from Mexico to southern Brazil, Paraguay, and the Lesser Antilles. They live in trees, spending much of their time off the ground. These animals can grow from 4 feet to 6 feet long and continue growing throughout their lives. Adult iguanas can weigh as much as 15 pounds and live up to 25 years in captivity. Iguanas are inactive 90 to 96 percent of their lives. Being diurnal lizards, they are most active during the day. They spend only 1 percent of their lives feeding.

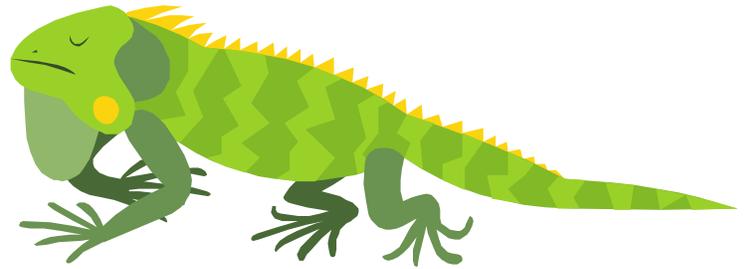
### Habitat

Green Iguanas have very specific housing requirements. Since a reptile's growth is affected by the amount of food it consumes and its metabolic rate, a green iguana can outgrow a 20-gallon aquarium in six months and be 4 feet long in 2 years! While an adult iguana requires a cage measuring at least 6 feet high by 6 feet wide by 4 feet deep, a hatchling can do well in a 55-gallon or 75-gallon aquarium for the first few years.

Iguanas love to climb. Provide branches for basking and climbing. They can be real or artificial, but make sure they are sturdy. Avoid branches from outside, as they may have mites or pesticides on them. The enclosure should include a thick basking branch that allows the animal to get close (6 to 18 inches) to a basking lamp. Because iguanas spend much of their time in this spot, the branch should be large enough to allow the animal to rest comfortably for long periods.

The substrate on the bottom of the cage can be reptile bark, forest bark, plantation soil with aspen, or any type of substrate that holds moisture.

It is important to keep the entire cage area clean. The water bowl should be cleaned every day, or whenever it looks dirty. Feces should be removed as soon as possible. With its long tail, an iguana can walk through fecal matter easily, spreading it throughout the cage. Before disinfecting the cage, remove the animal first. Use a product to clean & disinfect cages such as "ZooMed Wipe Off" or one part chlorine bleach to 10 parts water. The cage should be dry before the animal is returned to it.



### Temperature

**During the Day** - Iguanas are heat lovers! The **cool** side of your dragon's enclosure should be in the low 80<sup>o</sup>s. The warm side should be around 90<sup>o</sup>F. The basking area should be between 100<sup>o</sup> and 105<sup>o</sup>F (surface temp). Don't guess at the temperature, use thermometers. One on the cool side, one on the warm side and one on the basking site. **Caution: DO NOT COOK YOUR LIZARD!** Place a thermometer on the basking area. Increase or decrease the distance of your basking light until you get the right temperature. Bask the entire lizard, don't just bask half of your lizard. Increase the distance until the entire body of the lizard is included in the basking area. If the basking light is shining on an area the size of the *entire lizard* (tail not included), and the surface temp is too low - get a higher wattage bulb. Please make sure your animal cannot touch the basking light.

An under-the-tank heater beneath the cage floor also provides belly heat. This provides heat to help a reptile digest its food - they should NEVER be considered a heat source in an iguana's habitat. Avoid heat rocks since your lizard may lay on it too long and burn their belly. If your pet's habitat is too cool, food may not be digested properly which can lead to many problems.

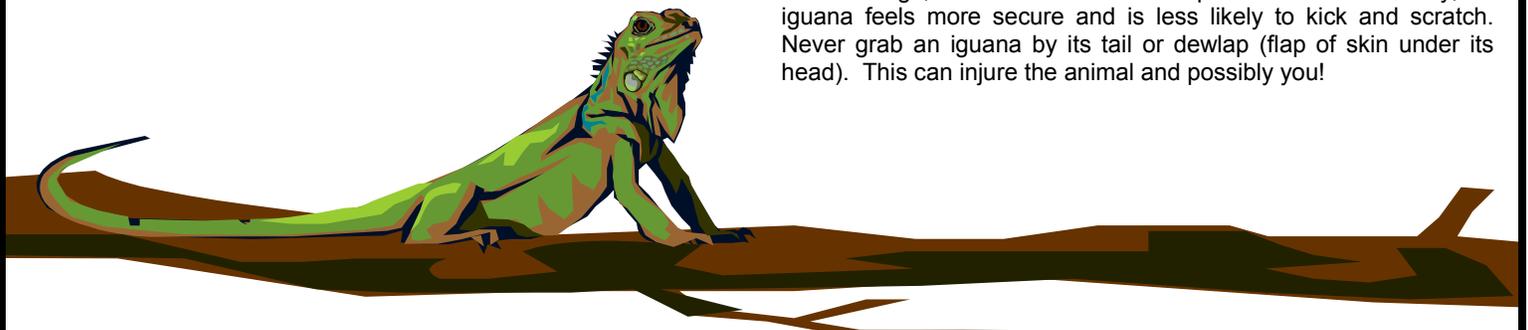
**During the night** - the overall temp should be between 65<sup>o</sup> and 75<sup>o</sup> F. The temperature drop mimics their natural habitat.

### Choosing your pet

Healthy iguanas look alert. Their eyes are bright and follow anyone who approaches them. Limbs are plump, with no hip bones showing. The skin is smooth, with no bumps, lumps, or dark blotches. Iguanas can regenerate their tails, but they never look as perfect as the original.

Before you buy an iguana, handle it to check out its temperament. Iguanas that appear too docile or too excitable are probably not the healthiest in the bunch.

Hold a large iguana by placing an arm beneath the body, between the front legs, so the arm serves as a perch. Held in this way, an iguana feels more secure and is less likely to kick and scratch. Never grab an iguana by its tail or dewlap (flap of skin under its head). This can injure the animal and possibly you!



## Water

Iguanas should be offered water (preferably misted), but usually obtain enough fluids from the foods they eat. Misting twice daily will help keep the humidity level high in the enclosure. A large water bowl also adds to the humidity, as it evaporates in the warmth of the cage enclosure.

## Lighting

Iguanas need UVB light in order to use the calcium in their diet. Many incandescent bulbs call themselves "full spectrum" lighting, but in reality they provide UVA lighting. While reptiles do need UVA, it will not promote the synthesis of vitamin D<sub>3</sub> in the skin and their systems will not be able to use the calcium in their diet. Many reptile owners are using dietary vitamin D<sub>3</sub> rather than rely on lighting. There is still much research needed in this area, no one answer seems to be true for all reptiles. We maintain that the most natural environment possible is best for your pet. In this instance, we recommend UVB lighting for the health of your pet.

In order to be effective, mount the UVB light fixture between 12" and 18" from your lizard's basking area. Keep all lighting elements on a timer in order to get the proper photo period. Your lizard needs a 14 hour daytime period. If you use an incandescent bulb for heat, use a infrared bulb at night so as not to interrupt your pet's sleep cycle.

**NOTE:** Improper diet, inadequate heat, and or improper lighting can cause a reptile to not digest its food properly, or make use of the calcium and other nutrients in its diet. This can cause a calcium deficiency. Metabolic Bone Disease can affect organs as well as bones. Bones become spongy and fractures occur. The lizard may exhibit muscle tremors or a jerky gait. **UBV lighting, a calcium supplement, and proper temperature is a MUST for all Iguanas.**

## Diet

Diet is the area where most people fail their iguanas! Without proper nutrition, iguanas can suffer a variety of health problems. Introduce a young iguana to commercially prepared iguana food as soon as you bring him home! This is the best way to ensure that the animal is getting all the nutrients necessary for growth. By all means, offer fresh vegetables and fruits to supplement the prepared iguana food.

In the wild, iguanas chomp at leaves, tearing off tiny pieces and eating them. Therefore, you must chop food according to the size of the iguana. A cheese grater or food processor is ideal for preparing food for small iguanas

Food should be offered daily in a shallow dish, so the iguana can reach it easily while standing on the cage floor. The total diet should have a ratio of 2 parts calcium to 1 part phosphorus.

- Never feed an iguana iceberg lettuce, as it has no nutritional value.
- All foods should be washed thoroughly. The product "Nature Rinse" by Canopy Scientific, is a wash designed to remove any lingering pesticide or chemical commonly found on fruits and vegetables.
- Vitamin, mineral and calcium powder with D3 should be sprinkled on the food every other day for added nutrition.



## 30 - 45% of the diet – variety of dark leafy greens

collard greens	hibiscus leaves	parsley	chard*
mustard greens	hibiscus flowers	turnip greens	escarole
green onions	radish tops	dandelion greens/flowers	
spinach* bok choy*	Chinese cabbage*		
beet greens*	kale*		

\*These are *cruciferous vegetables*. See "GO EASY" below

## 30 - 40% of the diet = other vegetables

(chopped into appropriate-sized pieces and mixed together)

summer squash	celery	carrots
yellow squash	okra	green beans
cooked sweet potatoes	pea pods	sprouts
zucchini	carrots	bell peppers
legumes (cooked)sprouts		

## 10 - 15% of the diet = fresh fruit:

*Calcium-rich fruits are good to feed and include:*

Papaya	raspberries	mango	figs
--------	-------------	-------	------

Prickly pear cactus fruit

### Other fruits:

apples	apricot	pears	grapes
strawberries	tomatoes	blueberries	cranberries
melons	kiwi	peaches	cherries
figs	plums		

## 0 - 4% of the diet = grain based foods:

cooked pasta    bread    cooked cream of wheat  
cooked rice

## 0 - 3% of the diet = supplemental protein:

monkey biscuit    tofu    commercial iguana food  
A low-fat, meat-free dog food formulated for older dogs

## GO EASY ON THESE FOODS

The total diet should have a ratio of 2 parts calcium to 1 part phosphorus. Combine the following phosphorus rich vegetable with plenty of calcium-rich foods to try to keep the overall ratio in balance. (Calcium:Phosphorus)

### Vegetable with a low calcium/phosphorus ratio

Corn (1:33)	yams (1:3)
potato (1:8)	asparagus (1:3)
Brussels sprouts (1:2)	cauliflower (1:2)

### Vegetable high in calcium

Figs (2.5:1)	Raspberries (1.8:1)	Grapes (1.4:1)
Kumquat (2.3:1)	Blackberries 1.5:1)	Orange (2.3:1)
Tangerine (1.4:1)	Collard Green (14.6:1)	Cabbage (2:1)
Celery 1.6:1)	Turnip Greens (4.5:1)	Spinach (2:1)
Mustard Greens (2.4:1)	Spaghetti squash (2:1)	

### Vegetable with oxalates and or phytates

Oxalates and phytates bind to calcium and prevent calcium from being used by the body. Keep amounts low in your iguana's diet.

spinach	chard	beets	rhubarb
whole grains	dock	beet greens	

\***Cruciferous Vegetables.** (See above list)

They contain substances that can inhibit the absorption of iodine. This can lead to goiter in your iguana. Include these food in your iguana's diet only once or twice a week.

**Please Note:** The information in this handout is meant to provide basic information only. Please see a salesperson for more information.

© B&B Pet Stop, Inc. 2013