

Blue-tongued lizard care

Blue-tongued lizards belong to the genus *Tiliqua*, which includes a total of eight species. These lizards belong to the skink family. Blue-tongued lizards (*Tiliqua scincoides*) make great pets; they have a calm and gentle personality, and with appropriate care, they can live a healthy and happy life for ~ 12-15 years.

Enclosure

- Enclosure size varies with size and age of the lizard; at a minimum the enclosure should be 1m (long) x 0.5m (wide)
- Enclosure should be constructed of materials that retain heat and are easy to clean (plastic/acrylic and wood). Complete glass enclosures are not ideal as they don't retain heat well, however, glass-fronted enclosures can be suitable.
- Newspaper or paper towels are the most hygienic and easy to clean substrates, and this limits substrate ingestion
- Provide hiding furniture (boxes, rocks) for enrichment, security and improved thermoregulation
- Disinfect enclosure once weekly and spot clean as needed

Diet. Blue-tongued lizards are omnivores.

- Offer approximately 50% plant food and 50% animal food/insects.
- Juveniles eat 1-2 times a day. Adults eat once every two to three days. Food items should be smaller than 1/3 width of their head.
- Insects include snails, roaches, moths, beetles and silkworms. Gut-load the insects with a commercial formula prior to feeding out.
- Plant foods include raw vegetables (eg. bok choy, spring mix, endive, dandelion, carrots, broccoli, capsicum, peas), fruits (berries, melon, apple, pear) and native flowers.
- Calcium-poor foods should be lightly dusted with calcium powder. Multivitamin/mineral powder should be supplemented once weekly.
- To minimise the risk of malnutrition, feed your lizard at least 3 varieties of insects and 3 varieties of plant foods.
- Provide a shallow water dish at all times.

Temperature

- Monitor the temperature with at least 2 digital thermometers placed at the level of your lizard
- Basking spot: 30-35C provided with a thermostatically-controlled globe
- Cool end: 24-28C
- Night temp: 18C or higher. Use a heat mat underneath the enclosure if required. Do not use hot rocks

UV light

- Provide UVB radiation 290-320nm. This is required for vitamin D3 production in the skin, which allows calcium absorption from the gut. Recommended light cycle is 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness.
- UV globes should be placed in the same position as the heat lamp, within a distance recommended by the manufacturer, and not filtered by glass. Replace the globe at least every 6 months (even if the globe still appears to be working).
- No artificial UV globe is a replacement for natural sunshine. Take your lizard outside in a secure carrier/cage for 20-30 minutes of unfiltered sunshine 2-3 times a week. Make sure shade is provided to prevent overheating.

Health care

- Blue-tongued lizards should have annual health checks
- Weigh your blue-tongued lizards regularly (~ once fortnightly) and record the weight
- Any newly acquired lizards should be quarantined and health checked
- Wash your hands after handling your blue-tongued lizard and between handling of different reptiles