

## 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. All glass enclosure may not retain heat well as glass is a poor insulator.
- There are many substrate options, all having pros and cons. Newspaper or paper towels are an easy to clean substrate. Recycled paper litter provides opportunities for burrowing.
- Provide hiding furniture (boxes, rocks) for enrichment, security and improved thermoregulation
- Outdoor enclosures should be considered if the local climate permits, ensuring both shade and sunshine are available and the area is predator and escape proof.
- Disinfect enclosure once weekly and spot clean as needed

Diet. Blue-tongued lizards are omnivores/insectivores.

- Offer approximately 50% plant food and 50% animal food/insects.
- Juveniles eat one to two 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, silkworms woodies, moths, beetles and silkworms. Gut-load the insects with a high-quality 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.
- **Supplements:** calcium-poor insect and plant foods should be lightly dusted with calcium carbonate powder each time, and multivitamin powder every 2 weeks, immediately before being fed. Additional supplements, such as omnivore powders (eg. EarthPro OmniGold), may also be used.
- 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: ~21-24C (to allow your lizard to thermoregulate)
- 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 positioned within a distance recommended by the manufacturer from the basking spot (usually ~ 30cm), 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

- Newly acquired lizards should be quarantined and examined by a vet, which may include parasite testing and blood tests. Annual check-ups are recommended thereafter.
- Weigh your blue-tongued lizards regularly and record the weight
- Wash your hands after handling your blue-tongued lizard and between handling of different reptiles