
Butterfly Agama (*Leiolepis belliana*) Care Guide

Natural History

- **Common Name:** Butterfly Agama / Butterfly Lizard
- **Scientific Name:** *Leiolepis belliana*
- **Origin:** Southeast Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos)
- **Habitat:** Dry, sandy grasslands and open scrub with burrows
- **Lifestyle:** Diurnal (active during the day), terrestrial, burrowing
- **Lifespan:** 8–12+ years in captivity

These lizards are known for their **flashy, colorful flank displays** (the “butterfly” effect) and fast, alert behavior.

Enclosure Setup

Size

- **Minimum for 1 adult:** 40-gallon breeder (larger preferred)
- **Recommended:** 4 ft x 2 ft x 2 ft enclosure
- **Pairs/groups:** Much larger space required (they can be territorial)

Substrate

- Ideal for burrowing:
 - 60% sand + 40% soil mix
 - Packed firm but diggable
- Depth: **6–10 inches minimum**

Decor

- Flat basking rocks
 - Cork bark / hides
 - Open running space (they are very active)
 - Sparse plants (real or fake)
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Temperature & Lighting

Heat

- **Basking spot:** 100–110°F
- **Warm side:** 85–90°F
- **Cool side:** 75–80°F
- **Night:** 70–75°F (can drop slightly)

Lighting

- **UVB REQUIRED (very important)**
 - Use T5 HO UVB (10.0 or 12%)
 - Distance depends on bulb strength (usually 10–14 inches)
 - **Photoperiod:** 12–14 hours light daily
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Humidity & Water

- **Humidity:** Low to moderate (30–50%)
 - Provide:
 - Shallow water dish
 - Occasional light misting (not constant humidity)
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Diet & Feeding

Insects (Primary Diet)

- Crickets
- Dubia roaches
- Black soldier fly larvae
- Mealworms (limited)
- Superworms (treat)

Vegetation (Important!)

- Collard greens
- Mustard greens
- Dandelion greens
- Squash
- Occasional fruits (berries, mango)

17 **Feeding Schedule**

- **Juveniles:** Daily
- **Adults:** 4–5 times per week

Supplements

- Calcium (without D3): 3–4x/week
 - Calcium (with D3): 1x/week
 - Multivitamin: 1x/week
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Behavior & Temperament

- Very **alert and fast**
 - Can be **skittish**, especially wild-caught individuals
 - Males may display bright colors when excited or stressed
 - Can become somewhat tolerant of keepers over time
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Social Housing

- **Best kept solo or carefully in pairs**
 - **Male vs male = aggression**
 - Females may cohabitate in large enclosures with caution
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Breeding (Advanced)

- Egg-laying species
 - Requires:
 - Deep nesting substrate
 - Seasonal cycling (cooler/drier period helps trigger breeding)
 - Clutch size: 2–6 eggs
 - Incubation: ~60–70 days at ~82–86°F
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Common Issues

Health Concerns

- Parasites (VERY common in wild-caught animals)
- Dehydration
- Metabolic Bone Disease (lack of UVB/calcium)
- Stress from improper setup

Prevention

- Always quarantine new animals
 - Fecal test with reptile vet
 - Proper UVB + diet = critical
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Maintenance Routine

- Spot clean daily
 - Replace substrate every few months
 - Clean water dish daily
 - Monitor temps & humidity regularly
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Pros & Cons

Pros

- Unique and colorful displays
- Active and interesting to watch
- Hardy once established

Cons

- Often wild-caught (initial health issues)
 - Skittish, not a “handleable” pet
 - Needs deep substrate and strong lighting
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Quick Summary

- **Hot basking temps + strong UVB = essential**
- **Omnivore (insects + greens)**
- **Needs deep substrate for burrowing**
- **Better for intermediate keepers**

