

Ameiva ameiva

Natural Origin & Habitat

- **Native range:** Central & South America + Caribbean (Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Argentina, Paraguay, Trinidad, etc.)
- **Environment:**
 - Open tropical forests, savannas, grasslands, and disturbed areas
 - Forest edges, brushland, and sunny clearings
- **Lifestyle:**
 - **Diurnal (day active)** and **ground-dwelling**
 - Extremely fast, alert, and burrow-oriented
- **Microhabitats:**
 - Leaf litter, logs, burrows, rocks for shelter and thermoregulation

👉 **Key takeaway:** They are **sun-loving, high-energy terrestrial lizards** that need heat, space, and substrate.



Size, Lifespan & Temperament

- **Adult size:** 16–24 inches total length
 - **Lifespan:**
 - 5–15+ years possible with good care
 - **Temperament:**
 - Skittish, fast, not typically “handleable”
 - Can become somewhat tolerant with time
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Enclosure Setup

Minimum Size

- **Absolute minimum:** 40 gallon (temporary)
- **Recommended:**
 - **4x2x2 ft (120 gallon)** for one adult
 - Bigger is MUCH better (they are runners)

Substrate (VERY important)

- Depth: **5–8+ inches**
- Best mixes:
 - Topsoil + sand + coco fiber
 - Cypress mulch / forest floor blends

👉 They **must be able to dig and tunnel**.

Decor

- Logs, cork bark, rocks (secure!)
- Dense cover + open basking zones
- Optional climbing branches
Rock flats

Water

- Large dish (they may soak occasionally)



Temperature & Lighting

Temps

- **Basking spot:** 100–110°F (38–43°C)
- **Ambient:** 80–90°F
- **Cool side:** 75–80°F
- Night: can drop to ~70–75°F

👉 They naturally run hot (~100°F+ body temp in wild)

Lighting

- **UVB REQUIRED (T5 HO 10.0 recommended)**
- 10–12 hour light cycle



Humidity

- Target: **50–70%**
 - Slightly higher in substrate layers
 - Mist lightly or maintain moist lower substrate
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Diet & Feeding

Natural Diet

- Insects + small vertebrates + occasional plant matter

Captive Diet

Staples:

- Crickets
- Dubia roaches
- Grasshoppers
- Mealworms / superworms

Occasional:

- Pinky mice
- Eggs
- Small amounts of fruit

Feeding Schedule

- Babies: daily
- Juveniles: 4–5x/week
- Adults: 3–4x/week

Supplements

- Calcium (with D3): 2–3x/week
 - Multivitamin: 1x/week
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Behavior & Handling

- Very **active and intelligent hunters**
 - Not ideal for frequent handling
 - Stress easily if chased or grabbed
 - Best as a **display species**
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Maintenance

- Spot clean daily
 - Replace substrate periodically
 - Clean water dish frequently
 - Maintain proper humidity balance
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Breeding (Quick Overview)

- Egg-laying species (oviparous)
 - Clutch size: ~4–7 eggs
 - Requires deep substrate and proper temps
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Common Mistakes

- Too small enclosure
 - Not enough substrate (no digging)
 - Low heat / weak basking spot
 - No UVB
 - Expecting a “handleable” lizard
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Ideal Setup Summary

- Large **4x2x2+ enclosure**
- Deep diggable substrate
- Strong basking heat (100–110°F)
- UVB lighting
- High-protein insect diet
- Minimal handling