



LISA M. CARR, DVM
drcarr@marylandexotics.com

240-687-1414

UROMASTYX (SPINY TAIL LIZARD) HUSBANDRY AND CARE

DIET

Most uromastyx lizards are herbivores so they eat mainly vegetables. A few species may require more protein in their diet and can be offered gut-loaded crickets every few weeks. Juveniles require a higher percentage of protein in their diet than adults do. Incorporating softened iguana or tortoise pellets is beneficial to maintaining a healthy lizard. Dark leafy greens, such as collards, kale and dandelion greens are good sources of calcium. Squash, sweet potatoes and other mixed vegetables can also be fed in small amounts for a balanced diet. Calcium supplements should be given 2-3 times a week and multivitamins (with Vitamin A) should be given once a week to every other week. If your uromastyx eats 30-50% pelleted diet with the greens, you do not need to apply the extra vitamins to the food. Make sure to research the specific dietary requirements for your species. Fresh water should always be available. Soaking two to three times a week for 10 minutes in warm, shallow water may be needed in addition to a water dish for hydration. This will depend on the age and import status of your uromastyx. Check with your veterinarian.

HOUSING

A 30-gallon fish tank with a secure, fine, mesh screen top is a good cage to start with for most young uromastyx. Depending on the species you will have to buy or have built an appropriate sized enclosure - preferably four times the length or more of the animal. Hide boxes that are low enough to touch the uromastyx are important for them to feel secure in their enclosures. A basking area with an incandescent bulb should be offered on one side of the cage. The temperature under that light, where the uromastyx will actually sit should reach 110-150 (depending on the species) degrees F and in 80-90 degrees F at the cooler end. The temperature should drop to 60-70 degrees F at night. You also need to offer a 5.0 UVb fluorescent light over the basking area. This bulb needs to be 7-15 inches from the animal in order to work well. Make sure there is NO glass or plastic between this bulb and your uromastyx. Lights should be on 12 hours a day and UVb fluorescent bulbs need to be replaced every 6 months (even if they still work). Right now there are several incandescent bulbs that provide heat and UVb such as, T-Rex Active UVB Heat bulbs and Zoomed's PowerSun UVB bulb. Use newspaper, indoor/outdoor carpet or Care Fresh as substrate. Uros love to burrow so the Care Fresh is ideal. Natural sunlight is the best source of UVb light. You can expose your uromastyx to the summer months but DO NOT leave your lizard outside in a glass tank or an enclosed container because it will overheat. Dogs, cats, raccoons, etc. like to eat uromastyx so DO NOT leave your uromastyx unattended outside unless you are positive the cage is secure.

VETERINARY CARE

Veterinary care is important in uromastyx lizards because most of the animals in the pet trade are caught from the wild. Many animals suffer from malnourishment and dehydration during shipment. Internal and external parasites are also common in wild animals. Yearly exams help maintain health and identify problems such as gout, skin infections and other problems. If you would like to schedule an appointment, please call our office at 240-687-1414.

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