

Green iguanas are popular pets due to their affordability. As babies, they are small and appear easy to care for, But this is a common misconception. Continue reading below to learn how to properly care for your current or future green iguana.

Housing:

Like all living creatures, the green iguana starts small but will eventually reach lengths of 6 feet. So naturally, they will need an enclosure that is appropriate for that size. As hatchlings, they can live in 29-gallon tanks; But as they grow so must their tanks. It is important that you do not put your hatchling in a large enclosure to start. This can cause stress as well as issues with finding food and water. When purchasing your hatchling always keep in mind that they grow quite fast so their enclosures need to grow as well! Once your iguana reaches 16 inches long it is time to upgrade! At that length, they are large enough to graduate to a big enclosure. Although similar problems may occur so always be vigilant and make sure they can find their food and water easily. At this point, it is recommended to move them to a 6ft high x 4ft wide x2 ft deep enclosure. Although a well-socialized iguana with an owner who allows them to be out around their house may be able to stay in this enclosure permanently, for those who do not have the option of free-roaming or the time to spend interacting a larger enclosure is ideal. 6ft x 6ft x 6 ft will suffice for a grown iguana. No matter the size of the enclosure there need to be things to climb on. Iguanas are primarily arboreal animals and enjoy being high in the trees. It is also important to offer foliage for your iguana to blend in with and feel secure. It is always important not to put any plants in your enclosure before researching and ensuring they are nontoxic for your iguana.

Water:

Although Iguanas are primarily arboreal creatures water is still a major component in a happy healthy iguana's life. When they are babies it is important to have a water bowl large enough for them to soak in. Sometimes young iguanas struggle to locate their water source as a precautionary measure misting your iguana and its enclosure is recommended. As they age and their enclosures grow you can start adding larger and deeper water features. You must at least provide a water source large enough for your iguana to comfortably fit in as well as submerge itself. This is a minimum requirement for housing an iguana at A Dragon's Den reptile rescue.

Substrate:

. In this section, we will cover a couple of our favorite substrates for your enclosures. Just like many other topics surrounding reptiles, there are quite a few different opinions on the proper substrate in an iguana enclosure. What do we recommend? As a young iguana starting them out on repti-carpet or some variation of disposable flooring. This method works very well in the small enclosure you have for a hatchling. But as they start to grow and the enclosure gets quite large using repti - carpet isn't very practical. At this point, you have some options. you can use cypress mulch in the bottom that you clean weekly (depending on your iguana and its bathroom habits) or you can make your enclosure bioactive. Although cypress mulch can be a part of both options, the bioactive enclosure has its isopods and other little clean-up critters that act as a self-cleaning cage.

Temperatures:

Iguanas enjoy a hot environment. Your enclosure should range from 80 F to 120F. Stay away from heat rocks and other flooring heat sources. When dealing with them your iguana will often get burned due to the extreme heat directly touching their underside. You will always want the heat from coming from above.

Food:

Iguanas are vegetarians, meaning they do not eat meat like a carnivore, or insects like an insectivore. They eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and should be offered to them daily. Please see examples below.

Greens:

Mustard, turnip, collard, kale, dandelion, basil, parsley

Other veggies:

Peppers, Celery, Carrots, Zucchini, squash, green beans, radishes, peeled cucumber, asparagus

Fruits:

Bananas with peel, oranges, apples, grapes, plums, apricot strawberries, raspberries, blueberries

Food to stay away from onions, spinach, Spicy Peppers, Lettuce, oranges, limes, lemons, any other type of citrus

Vitamins:

Like humans, vitamins and supplements can help boost our immune system as well as our general health and the way we feel. Most importantly, the calcium! Calcium is a major part of the growth, bone density, energy and so much more! The use of calcium is important and can and will direct your reptile's chance at life, as well as the quality if they survive! Calcium comes with D3 and without it. D3 is not necessary for your reptile if UVB is provided. With that being said a weekly dose of calcium with D3 in it is not a bad idea!

Lighting

Like all the sections before this one, this is of utmost importance. Lighting may seem like an easy thing to do and accomplish based on the mentality that they are like us, we live indoors with no special lighting so shouldn't they be able to? The answer (with few exclusions as we get into amphibians and specific reptiles) is no! They absolutely need to have proper lighting! UVB is the addition to every enclosure that helps your iguana digest and absorb the calcium, as well as provide a natural energy source to them! The light options are limited. Sadly it's between tube lighting and Mercury-based lighting! The mercury-based light has its pros and cons! The major pro to this style of light is that it provides not only UVA/UVB light also serves as a heating source in your cage! Tube lighting is the next option. Just as the option before it, it has its pros the long light offers you two options, T5 and T 8. Just as the mercury bulbs, it is recommended for all UVB bulbs to be changed every 6 to 9 months depending on the bulb you choose!