

Supplements

Calcium powders can be supplemented to the diet by dusting the food once or twice a week.

Multivitamins can be supplemented to the diet by dusting the food once or twice a month.

Note that some Uromastyx will refuse food if dusted. The key is to provide a varied and nutritious diet that does not rely heavily on supplementation.

Tips For a Happy, Healthy Animal

- Take a newly purchased Uromastyx to an exotic animal veterinarian for a wellness examination and fecal exam for intestinal parasites.
- Quarantine new Uromastyx in a separate area of the house for at least 30-90 days.
- Make sure any branches, rocks or furnishings in the enclosure are clean and disinfected.
- Paver stones from a hardware store may be a good option for basking sites and the mildly rough surface may help with wearing down nails and for shedding.
- Limit stress. Keep Uromastyx physically and visually separate from other reptiles and animals for at least the first few weeks. Over time, depending on the personality of your Uromastyx, he/she will tolerate seeing other animals.
- Provide natural sunlight as much as possible. Supervise your Uromastyx and make sure he/she is not overly stressed/agitated while outside. Ensure your Uromastyx does not get too cold or too hot while outside.
- Make sure your Uromastyx is secure from predators and potentially toxic materials such as plants, insects, pesticides and chemicals.
- Monitor shedding. If your Uromastyx is not shedding all of his/her skin, you can soak him/her in warm water once a day. If soaking, always ensure he/she is supervised and make sure his/her head is able to be held out of the water.

Important to Avoid

- Housing together with another reptile species. Housing alone is best unless breeding.
- Sharp edges in the enclosure.
- Dangerous furnishings in the enclosure. Make sure furnishings are secured to prevent falling on your Uromastyx. Keep in mind that most Uromastyx are not agile climbers and are prone to falling injuries.
- Free roaming of the house and free from cats, dogs or other predators.
- Direct contact with heating elements or light sources. Make sure to read the minimum and maximum distances recommended by the manufacturer for UVB lighting.
- Excessive handling. Most Uromastyx will tolerate handling over time.
- Small children or inexperienced people handling your Uromastyx.
- Unsanitary or dusty housing.
- Allowing the enclosure get too hot or too cold.

Common Disorders

- Malnutrition, including secondary nutritional hyperparathyroidism (metabolic bone disease)
- Dehydration
- Reproductive disease, such as those related to eggs
- Shedding problems
- Intestinal parasites
- Respiratory or eye infections
- Kidney disease
- Bladder stones

Additional Reading

Basic Care of Uromastyx. Philippe De De Vosjoli.

Uromastyx (Advanced Vivarium Systems). Jerry G Walls.

Many commonly seen conditions are the result of malnutrition and/or inadequate housing and are preventable.

Regular visits to your reptile veterinarian should be scheduled to check for parasites and other early signs of disease and to promote a long, satisfying relationship with your Uromastyx Lizard. For help in finding a reptile/amphibian veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians (www.ARAV.org) or contact the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (www.ABVP.com/diplomate)

HOW TO KEEP YOUR UROMASTYX LIZARDS HEALTHY, HAPPY AND SAFE!



Published by



Text by: Justin Oguni, DVM
Louisa M. Asseo, DVM, DABVP



NATURAL HISTORY

Uromastix lizards are also known as spiny-tailed lizards, agamids, dab, or mastigure lizards. They are in the family Agamidae, which includes Old World agamid lizards such as bearded dragons and African agamas (please note that there has been some reclassification of this genus). Uromastix naturally occur in North Africa, the Middle East and south-central Asia and tend to inhabit rocky terrain near vegetation and shelter. They prefer to bask in direct sunlight with basking temperatures frequently exceeding 100° Fahrenheit (38° Celsius). There are 13 species in the genus Uromastix. The ones most likely encountered in captivity include ornate Uromastix (*U. ornate*), Egyptian Uromastix (*U. aegyptia*), and Nigerian/Saharan Uromastix (*U. geyri*). The Mali Uromastix (*U. dispar/maliensis*) and the Moroccan Uromastix (*U. acanthinurus*) are becoming increasingly rare in the pet trade because they are no longer exported.

What to Expect From My Animal

Uromastix tend to be gentle and inquisitive lizards. Most can become accustomed to handling and will learn to recognize their caretakers. Most Uromastix are not inclined to bite, with the exception of some Moroccan Uromastix. Uromastix can be resilient pets as long as they are healthy when obtained and provided the proper care.

Is My Animal Male or Female?

Uromastix can be sexed by gently lifting the tail and examined for 2 bulges at the base of the underside of the tail right past the vent opening. These bulges are created by the paired hemipenes, the male reproductive organs. Absence of these bulges suggests that your Uromastix is a female.

Some species are also sexually dimorphic and can be differentiated by coloration and size, but this is not always reliable.

Housing and Substrate

The minimum recommended enclosure size should be 36 x 18 inches (90cm x 45cm) for individuals under 10 inches (25cm) (e.g. 40 gallon tank), 48 x 18 inches (120cm x 45cm) for individuals 10-15 inches (25-38cm) (e.g. 75 gallon tank), and 72 x 24 inches (180cm x 60cm) for individuals larger than 15 inches (38cm) (e.g. custom built enclosure or modified plastic storage containers/pond liners/cattle troughs).

Particulate substrates can be used but can cause intestinal blockage if the substrate is ingested. Sand (e.g. playsand) and topsoil mixtures or clay (e.g. ZooMed Excavator Clay Burrowing Substrate) can be used to allow for burrowing. Substrate ingestion can be limited by providing food in shallow dishes or on rocks. Newspaper or paper towels can be used to line the enclosure and are easy to replace when dirty. Ceramic tiles, slates or linoleum can be used to line the enclosure and are easily cleaned as well.

Temperature and Humidity Requirements

Maintain a temperature gradient from 80-85° Fahrenheit (27-29° Celsius) on the cool side and 90-100° Fahrenheit (32-38° Celsius) on the warm side. A basking area with surface temperatures between 110-120° Fahrenheit (43-49° Celsius) should be provided. The night time temperature can drop but must remain above 65° Fahrenheit (18° Celsius). Heating can be monitored using digital thermometers. A mixture of basking bulbs and ceramic heat emitters can be used to manage temperatures. Avoid heat rocks and heat pads.

WHAT YOUR VETERINARIAN LOOKS FOR IN A HEALTHY UROMASTIX LIZARD

Vital Statistics:

Body length

Hatchlings tend to be 3-4 inches (7.5-10cm) in length and adults range in size from 10-18 inches (25-45cm) in total length, with the exception of the Egyptian Uromastix which can exceed 30 inches (75cm) in total length.

Body weight

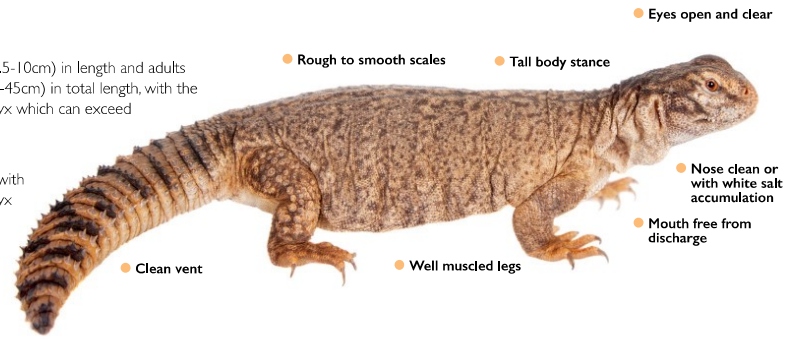
Adults range from 200-400 grams, with the exception of Egyptian Uromastix that can weigh twice that amount.

Age of sexual maturity

3-5 years of age

Longevity

15-30+ years in captivity



NOTE: Most, if not all, reptiles carry Salmonella bacteria in their intestinal tract and intermittently or continuously shed these bacteria in their feces, so they are unsuitable pets for very young children and those with compromised immune systems. Good hygiene must always be practiced around all reptiles, including uromastix lizard. For more information, please see the handout, Salmonella Information for Reptile Owners at <http://arav.org/salmonella-bacteria-reptiles>.



A humid hide should always be provided. These can be made using a closed (lid on) opaque storage container about 2-3 times the length of the lizard with a small opening made large enough for the lizard to enter and exit comfortably. Make sure sharp edges are smoothed. Fill the box with slightly moistened substrate such as coconut husk bedding, day or top soil, which should be changed weekly to prevent mold or bacterial growth.

Lighting Requirements

Provide 10-12 hours of UVB lighting daily and choose bulbs designed for desert species. Use a timer to have the lights come on and off at the same time each day. Lighting can be adjusted if needed for breeding purposes. Replace UVB lighting every six months or as recommended by manufacturer.

Diet

Uromastix are mostly herbivorous and are known to occasionally consume insect or animal matter in the wild. In captivity, they can be maintained on an exclusively vegetarian diet composed of mostly fresh green leafy vegetables, including but not limited to, collard greens, kale, mustard greens, dandelions (including flowers), escarole and endive.

Sparingly feed or avoid feeding vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, garden cress, bok choy, brussels sprouts and cauliflower because they are high in goitrogens that can disrupt thyroid gland function.

Do not feed them bird seed as this is not an appropriate food and can cause problems with intestinal impaction. Fruits are not recommended as part of the diet.

Commercial iguana or herbivorous reptile pelleted diets can be used as a supplement to the diet but should not be the sole diet provided.

Lentils (soaked in water) can be given as an occasional treat.

Insects (such as crickets, mealworms, and dubia roaches) can be fed sparingly once or twice a month.

Water

Uromastix get most of their water from their food. Therefore, it is important to make sure their food does not dry out before it is eaten.

Most Uromastix will not drink from standing water. However, a shallow bowl of fresh water should still always be provided. Uromastix can be encouraged to drink once or twice a week by dropping water onto their nose or misting the side of their enclosure. Do not over-mist them as humidity over 40% is not healthy for them.

Uromastix have a specialized nasal gland that helps remove salt from their bodies. This can be seen as white crusts accumulating around their nose.