

Factsheet 8 - KEEPING AN IGUANA

HOUSING

Be aware that Iguanas can grow 4-6 foot in length, so if you buy a small tank when your pet is still small you will have to replace this as the pet gets bigger. Large adult iguanas need very large living areas and the enclosure should have enough space to allow the Iguana to turn around in comfort and also fit the following items:

- 1) One or two tree trunks because Iguanas love climbing, and this makes them feel as if they are in their natural habitat.
- 2) Two food bowls with different types of fruit or vegetable so that the Iguana has a choice of food.
- 3) The bottom of the cage can be covered with green carpeting. Do not use newspaper.
- 4) Some low ledges on the side of the enclosure for the Iguana to climb up on.
- 5) Your pet also needs a water bowl that is about as big as their body without the tail.



LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE CONTROL

It is essential to give your Iguana a source of UV light -otherwise it will suffer from a type of osteoporosis and get sick. Lights are available in pet stores but pay careful attention to the following points:

- 1) Different UV lights work differently - some lights (the cheaper ones) have to be kept very close to the animal to work. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully with regards to this.
- 2) UV bulbs do not last forever -they gradually lose their ability to produce UV light and have to be replaced. Again, read the manufacturer's instructions with regards to this.

Temperature control is essential in the UK because the climate here is too cold for Iguanas. There are two options for heat, a ceramic heat emitter or a heat lamp. The ceramic emitters do not have light but offer great amounts of heat. You do have to be careful with all heat emitters for they can easily burn your pet. Lights can also burn your pet but are not as dangerous. Lights are available from pet stores and there are many different types -again read the instructions that come with the light before using it. Keep a thermometer in the tank to

monitor the temperature. It has to be from 88 degrees to 98 degrees Fahrenheit.

You can heat the underside of your tank with a heating pad. There are very good heat pads for reptiles and these are recommended because they are made for tanks. The hot rocks are overrated and can burn the underside of your pet - we recommend that you do not use these.

FEEDING YOUR IGUANA

Iguanas will eat animal protein, but they are VEGETARIAN in the wild and do better on vegetarian only diets. You have to make large salads that include many vegetables. You also have to make a fruit salad.

The vegetable salad can consist of:

Escarole

Parsley

Collard greens

Turnip greens

Alfalfa pellets or tablets -very good

Alfalfa sprouts

Mustard greens

Carrots

Carrot tops

Bean sprouts

Extra goodies that your pet will like are:

Squash

Sweet potatoes

Beans

Green beans

Snow peas

Green bell pepper

Fruits that can go in the salad:

Apples

Cantelope

Strawberries

Grapes

Kiwi fruit

Pears

Papaya

Mango

Pineapple

Things that you should only give them sparingly for treats:

Banana

Broccoli

Tofu

Green or Red leaf lettuce

Supplements are very important:

- 1) A commercial vitamin supplement for reptiles must be given (ask your vet or pet shop).
- 2) Calcium supplements are VERY important in iguanas. Low calcium is the most common cause of death in pet Iguanas.

To give the supplements do the following:

Mix the vegetables in one bag and a pinch of vitamin supplement and calcium supplement. You can keep the vegetables in the refrigerator until your pet eats them all. Do the same with the fruit. Get two bowls and put the fruit in one and the vegetables in the other.