

Uromastyx



Common Name: Uromastyx **Latin name:** *Uromastyx sp.*

Native to: Northern Africa, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Arab Peninsular, Israel, Niger, Afghanistan, Mali, Chad, Eritrea and Oman

Size: The average size is 14-16 inches with the exception being the *U. Aegyptius*, which can reach up to 30 inches in size.

Life span: Estimated at 10-15 years. Healthy well taken care of specimens can live much longer.

General appearance: Uromastyx are cute lizards with short snouts, with short squatty, but muscular looking legs, smooth backs and a spiny tail. Most range in colors of browns and tans with the exception of the *benti*, *ocellatus*, and the *acanthinurus*. The males of these three are more vibrant in coloration with blues, greens, yellows and oranges. Females have similar colors but not as vibrant and have less of the blues and greens.

Housing requirements

Enclosure: A hatchling may be kept in a 20 gallon long (30 x 12 x 12 ½) until they reach juvenile stage. They should then be moved up to a 40-gallon (36 x 18 x 17) or a 50-gallon (38 x 13 x 21). Adults should not be kept in anything smaller. Uromastyx require many hide spots to make themselves feel secure. They like to burrow into the ground, so keepers provide hand made tunnels made of large PVC pipes or dryer tubing and hide boxes. You can also use pieces of slate, they add beauty to the enclosure and also double for a place for the uromastyx to bask, and they are great heat holders.

Temperature: Day: 85° - 90° F, Night: 60° - 70° F, Basking: 120° - 130° F. A heat lamp should be positioned over one end of the tank to produce the basking spot. Use thermometers or temperature gun to measure temperature.

Heat/Light: You can use a high watt light or ceramic heat emitter or both. Uromastyx require UVB, this is a must for a healthy lizard to help prevent metabolic bone disease. The UVB helps produce vitamin D3 in the skin, which enables the metabolism of calcium. The lizard cannot process calcium in bone without D3. New lights on the market are combination basking and UVB lights. A photoperiod of 14 hours of daylight during the summer and 10-12 hours of daylight during the winter should be provided.

Substrate: For hatchlings/juveniles under 6 inches total length, bare tank bottoms or butcher's paper is recommended. Hatchlings are much more sensitive to ingesting dry, hard material so it's best to avoid the problem. Birdseed is a new idea for a substrate. Place commercial wild birdseed in the freezer for 4 to 6 hours in order to kill off any moth eggs or larvae.

Environment: Humidity should be kept below 30-40% since they are desert dwellers. Uros tend to avoid overly sandy locales in the wild, preferring clay/sand or gravelly-loam mixes, rocky outcrops or soils better suited to holding a burrow without collapsing.

Diet: Uromastyx are Omnivorous. The majority of their diet consists of vegetables with the occasional insects as a treat. Vegetables include carrots, beans, peas, corn, mustard greens, bok choy, collard greens, parsnips, squash and dandelion flowers. You can also offer birdseed and finch pellets in to the vegetable mix. Make sure anything picked from a garden or yard is 100% pesticide and herbicide free. Veggies not to feed are spinach, beet greens, Swiss chard, cabbage and limit broccoli and kale, these tend to bind important nutrients or tend to induce metabolic problems overtime. Romaine lettuce and regular lettuce provide no nutritional value. Insects include: crickets, mealworms, superworms and waxworms. Insects should be used sparingly because of their kidneys inability to process large amounts of protein. All foods should be dusted with Vitamin D3 and calcium.

Maintenance: Water is not required in the tank. They will get their moisture from the vegetable and the insects. Keeping water in the tank will only increase humidity. If you feel your lizard is in need of water, removed it from the enclosure and give it a warm soak in a separate container or tub. Do not make the water deep; about ¼ up the leg should be sufficient.

Keeping the burrows humid but not wet, and thoroughly drying the tail sections after a soak will help eliminate the possibility of tail rot.