

Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

Red Tegu (*Tupinambis rufescens*)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Red Tegus are found throughout western Argentina and parts of Uruguay. These lizards can reach four feet in total length. Male Tegus are larger than females and have much larger heads and jowls. Young male Tegus can be sexed by the presence of two enlarged scales at the base of the tail. At three years old Tegus become sexually mature but usually need to hibernate to reproduce successfully. Females can lay up to 25 eggs and with proper incubation they will hatch within 92 days. If you're not going to breed your Tegus it is best to keep them separately. With proper care you can expect your Tegu to live 15 years or more.

Temperature and UV Lighting

Red Tegus should be maintained between 85-90 degrees with a basking spot of 100 degrees. At night the temperature can drop to 70 degrees. Hours of daylight should be 12L/12D during a 24 hour period. Humidity should also be maintained at 60-80%. If you're planning to hibernate your Tegu, temperatures need to remain between 45-60 degrees. These lizards can handle brief exposure to temperatures below 40 degrees but it's not recommended. Tegus require 12-14 hours of UVB light for proper health and growth. This light enables the Tegu to produce vitamin D3. The vitamin D3 produced by UVB metabolizes the calcium in the lizards' diet. In general it's what makes a Tegus' bones hard and without it they can die. This process of inadequate UVB and calcium is called Metabolic Bone Disease. Also it is very important to change your UVB light every 6-8 months, after this time the light stops producing adequate UVB. If you're not sure if your UV light is still producing UVB, bring it in and we'll be happy to test the light for you.



Housing

Baby Red Tegus can be kept in a 29 gallon cage but they grow quickly and will soon need larger housing. Adult Tegus should be kept in a cage that is at least 6' long by 4' deep. Females can be kept in smaller enclosures.

Bedding

Our recommendation for bedding is bark or some type of mulch. This type of substrate holds moisture very well, allowing a higher humidity. Cages that are too dry can cause dehydration and shedding problems. When your lizard is shedding we recommend that you mist the cage with water once a day to increase humidity. Dry shed is the result of low humidity and dry skin can cause the loss of toes if it is not removed. The bedding should be deep enough to allow your Tegu to dig and bury itself.

Calcium

Tegus also require a calcium and vitamin supplement. This supplement works with the UVB light allowing the lizard to receive the proper amounts of calcium and vitamins. This should be used every day as babies and reduced to 1-2 times a week as adults. Calcium is sold in a powder form and is sprinkled on the crickets, fruits, and vegetables that you feed your Tegu. If you're feeding your Tegu rodents no supplementation is needed. You should apply a very light coating to the food items, being careful not to waste any excess powder.

Food

Red Tegus are omnivorous feeding on mice, rats, fish, snails, hard-boiled eggs, crickets, super worms, night crawlers, beef heart, fruits and vegetables. A mixed diet of these food items, four to five times per week, is ideal and will ensure proper growth and health.

Cleaning and Handling

The terrarium should be cleaned as necessary. Any fecal matter or left over food should be cleaned out several times a week. The bedding should be completely changed once a month and fresh clean water should be provided at all times. The inside of the terrarium can be cleaned out with an appropriate reptile cage cleaner, we recommend Natural Chemistry's Healthy Habitat. Tegus can be handled on a daily basis and usually tame down quite well. Never pick your Tegu up by the tail, unlike monitor lizards, Tegus can lose their tail. Broken tails do regenerate but will never look as good as the original. Always wash your hands before and after handling them.

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Prehistoric Pets Inc. (909) 465-6085

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