Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
www.AuroraAnimalHospital.com (303) 680-7305

Frilled Lizard Care

Dayna Willems, DVM

Brief Description
Frilled lizards are native to New Guinea and north coastal Australia. Their characteristic neck frill generally stays flat on the neck unless they are alarmed or feel threatened. Adults are generally 2-3 feet in length, with females being smaller. They are not recommended as a beginner reptile, but provided the correct husbandry they can thrive.

Lifespan
With appropriate care, they can live 10-15 years.

Sexing
Males can be distinguished from females by their larger size, larger and more colorful heads, and hemipene bulges at the bottom base of the tail.

Caging
Due to their size Frilled Lizards need large cages at least 4-6 feet tall and 5 feet long. As they are arboreal reptiles height is more important than width but the cage should be at least 3 feet wide to allow them to turn around easily. This generally necessitates a custom made cage to accommodate size and should be made from glass/plexiglass to help retain humidity. Originating from a climate with higher humidity than Colorado it is very important to maintain humidity.

Large branches should be available at multiple levels to allow climbing and the basking spot should be placed at the top of the cage. Shelves can also be added to allow resting areas. Live or artificial plants and leafy green foliage throughout the enclosure provide shelter and will make your frilled lizard feel more secure in its environment. If you choose to use live plants you might try Dracaena, Schefflera arboricola (umbrella plant), hibiscus, ficus bushes, Pothos, and spider plant.

Water
Frilled lizards have an affinity to soak and swim in water on a daily basis, therefore a pool at least 2 feet long should always be provided. It is recommended that water be provided in the form of a removable tub to allow for easier cleaning but can designed as part of the enclosure itself as long as a filtering system is incorporated. Most lizards defecate in their water as well as soaking so it will need to be cleaned daily.

Substrate
A good substrate to use is a combination of coco fiber, play sand and organic potting soil with about a 2-inch depth. This substrate holds humidity well and is not dusty. Other substrates that could be used include pure cypress mulch or a commercial forest bedding. Reptile carpet is also an appropriate substrate choice that is easy to maintain and keep clean. Avoid cedar/pine/aspen mulches, all sand, carefresh bedding, or alfalfa pellets.

Lighting and Temperature
Frilled lizards need a warm place to bask (**110-115 degrees**) on one side of the cage in order digest food and nutrients properly. The other side of the cage should be cooler (**80-85 degrees**) so they don't overheat. A thermometer should be placed at both ends of the cage to accurately measure temperatures. Lights should be on for 10-12 hours each day and then total darkness at night. Night temperatures can safely drop to 60 degrees so a night time heat source is not necessary in most homes.

Lizards MUST have UVB light to survive and a lack of UVB will lead to Metabolic Bone Disease, severe deformation, and death. A commercially available UVB bulb is necessary as UVB does not penetrate glass or plastic so having the cage near a window does not work. Look for UVB listed specifically on retail packaging before buying.

- After about 6 months of use most bulbs will stop emitting adequate levels of UVB, even though they are still shining, so it's important to change the bulb every 6 months.

Humidity
Humidity in the cage should be 60-70% at all times, which is admittedly difficult to maintain in our dry Colorado climate. An automatic misting system is often necessary to raise humidity multiple times a day. Open sided cages (screen, bars, etc.) will not maintain proper levels so a solid sided cage (wood, plexiglass, glass, etc) is recommended. Humidity should be monitored by a digital hygrometer.

Food
Frilled lizards are primarily insectivores. The best insects to use are crickets, dubia roaches, and superworms, which should all be gutloaded. Other live insects that can be included in your lizard's diet are hornworms, earthworms, butterworms, and silkworms. Wax worms and mealworms should only be given as a treat because of the high fat content and low digestibility. Vegetables can be offered as part of the diet but may or may not be eaten.

Gutloading
Gutloading is the process of feeding crickets, superworms, and dubia roaches a nutritious diet so they can ultimately provide your reptile with the proper nutrients it requires as it would in nature. Supplementing with a calcium and multivitamin powder is important, but not sufficient alone.

Creating a well-rounded gutload at home can seem daunting but can actually be fairly inexpensive and easy to make! Each time you go to the store get one or two staple vegetables on the list above, then rotate them for something else next time. Make sure you wash all produce to eliminate pesticide residues and cut off the peel of fruits and vegetables as they have waxes and pesticides you can't wash off. The time from feeding insects, to your reptile eating those insects, should be 6-24 hours, and gutloading must be done before every feeding to be successful.

Staple Ingredients (Highest in calcium and other nutrients)					
					
Collard Greens	Turnip Greens	Mustard Greens	Escarole	Endive	Dandelion

Good Ingredients (Use as supplements to staples listed above)					
					
Sweet Potato	Papaya	Kale	Butternut Squash	Berries	Mango
Commercial gutloads: Repashy Superload, Cricket Crack, Super Chow					

Avoid These Ingredients (Low in calcium and/or high in phosphorus, oxalates, goitrogens)
Idaho potatoes, cabbage, iceberg lettuce, spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, corn, grains, beans, bread, cereal, meat, eggs, dog food, cat food, fish food, canned or dried insects, vertebrates (pinkies, lizards). While convenient, some commercially available gutloads (Farms Orange Cubes, Fluker Farms High Calcium Cricket Diet, Nature Zone Cricket Bites) are low in calcium, imbalanced and/or insufficient for good nutrition.

Supplementation
A powdered calcium supplement (without phosphorus) should be used to lightly coat the crickets 3-4 times weekly until 2 years of age and then 1-2 times weekly after that. A multivitamin can be used less frequently (once or twice a month) if desired but with good nutrition this is not always necessary.