Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
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# Green Iguana Care

Please note these care sheets are intended for the average reptile owner to ensure that your pet is receiving basic care needed to have a healthy life and there are other aspects of advanced care that can be considered for healthy pets.

**Brief Description**

Green Iguanas *(Iguana iguana)* are native to central and south America. These hearty animals can grow to an impressive size with males being slightly larger than females at up to 6 feet. Green Iguanas were once the most popular pet in the pet trade and were commonly found as hatchlings. Few grew to adulthood as they have very specific care needs. Iguanas can be intense animals in size and demeanor once they reach sexual maturity and are therefore not recommended for beginner reptile owners.



**Lifespan**

With appropriate husbandry, these lizards can easily reach 15-20 years or more in age. Sadly, many do not live past the age of 5 due to poor care.

**Sexing**

Green iguanas are easy to differentiate between males and females once they reach sexual maturity. Males tend to be larger than females, with larger heads and well developed femoral pores on the undersides of their hind legs.

**Caging**

Juvenile green iguanas do well in a large enough glass aquarium, but as they quickly grow, they will need increasingly larger enclosures. Many iguana owners construct large home-made enclosures in order to provide the space that these animals need to climb, bask, and thermo-regulate. At a minimum, adult iguanas require a cage that is 6 feet tall, 6 feet wide, and 3 feet deep with plenty of climbing structures. A separate climate controlled room may be the most feasible option as these active lizards will use every space that is provided to them. An outdoor space for your iguana is also highly recommended for summer months, provided that the correct temperature requirements are met. Maintaining appropriate humidity should be taken into consideration when planning a cage.

**Substrate**

Providing correct humidity is an important part of Green Iguana care and an easy way to achieve that is by providing the correct substrate. Coconut coir is a great option for juvenile iguanas in the confines of an aquarium, but you may find that large adults throw it around their cage. Most large iguana owners go with easier to clean options and ensure that their iguanas get misted and get plenty of time to soak in large water bowls or bath tubs.

**Lighting and Temperature**

Reptiles are ectotherms (cold-blooded), meaning they need to absorb heat from their environment to regulate their own body heat since they cannot produce it. They need a warm place to bask (**95-100 degrees**) at the top of the cage in order digest food and nutrients properly. The lower part of the cage should be cooler (**75-80 degrees**) so they don't overheat. A thermometer should be placed at both parts of the cage to accurately measure temperatures. Your iguana will utilize different temperature zones throughout the day depending on its metabolism and needs. Lights should be on for 10-12 hours each day and then total darkness at night. A ceramic heat emitter can be used at night to ensure that the temperature doesn't go below 70 degrees, but doesn't disturb their sleep.
**Under tank heaters and heat rocks are not recommended as they are prone to causing burns.*

Iguanas 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.* T5 UVB bulbs provide better zones of UVB than compact fluorescents.

**Humidity**
Green iguanas are from a tropical environment and should have constant humidity between 70-85%. This can be achieved by misting multiple times a day, a fogger, or by running a cool-mist humidifier to increase the ambient humidity in the room.

**Food**
Green iguanas are strict herbivores and enjoy a wide variety of foods. Approximately 60% of their diet should consist of dark, leafy greens such as collard, turnip, mustard, and dandelion greens. The next 30% of their diet should consist of other vegetables such as squash, cooked sweet potato, carrot, green beans, and bell peppers. Fruit should make up the last 10% of their diet. Items like black berries, strawberries, apple, melon, banana, papaya, grapes, and edible flowers such as hibiscus are relished. Green iguanas should not be fed animal protein to protect their kidneys and there is no need for animal protein in their diet.

| **60% Dark, leafy greens** (Highest in calcium and other nutrients) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Collard Greens | Turnip Greens | Mustard Greens | Escarole | Endive | Dandelion |

| **30% Vegetables** | | | | | |
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sweet Potato | Green beans | Carrots | Butternut Squash | Bell Peppers | Yellow Squash |

| **10% Fruit, Flowers** | | | | | |
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Papaya | Berries | Mango | Apple | Bananas | Flowers |

| 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). |

**Supplementation**
A powdered calcium supplement (without phosphorus) should be used to lightly coat your iguana's salad 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. Iguanas naturally produce Vitamin D3 when exposed to proper UVB light or sunlight which is then utilized when processing calcium. Vitamin D3 supplementation with your calcium supplement is not required provided that you are feeding a balanced diet and your iguana is getting proper exposure to UVB wavelengths of light.

**Water**
Green iguanas are excellent swimmers and do well with a sturdy water bowl large enough to soak in. Fresh water should be provided daily. Some iguanas will not recognize still water as a drinking source and an air stone connected to an air pump or a drip system may help encourage your iguana to drink.

**A note about iguanas: they often enjoy roaming the house but they need to spend at least 50% of their day in their designated environment to benefit from appropriate heat, humidity, and UVB exposure.**