Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
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Uromastyx Caresheet

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
Uromastyx, commonly called spiny-tailed lizards, are native to Asia and Africa. There are 18 species of uromastyx from a variety of regions but they are primarily arid, steppe habitats. Most species of uromastyx are between 10 and 18 inches in length, with the exception of the Egyptian uromastyx, which can exceed 30 inches in length. Many of the animals available are wild caught. This caresheet serves as a general guideline for most species seen in captivity, but some species may have species specific differences in husbandry.



Lifespan
With good care the average lifespan is about 15-20 years.

Sexing
Determining the gender of your uromastyx can be difficult, especially as juveniles. Once mature, if you look at the underside of the tail just past the vent males should have two bulges side by side where the hemipenes (reproductive organs) sit in the base of the tail. Females will not have this. If your uromastyx's hemipenes briefly come out of the body while defecating (normal) then it is definitely male. Males also tend to have larger femoral pores as adults that can fill with waxy substance (normal).

Caging
Uromastyx need large enclosures and should be in a 40 gallon tank or larger. Be sure to have a secure screen top on your cage that will support a light fixture, provide good ventilation, and keep pests out. Uromastyx do best when kept single per cage. Multiple hides should be available in different areas of the cage for thermoregulation. Stacked rocks (stable so they can't fall), logs, PVC pipes, etc. make great hides

Substrate
The ideal substrate for uromastyx is a subject of debate. While many keepers use sand successfully, there have been sand impactions in uromastyx that were fatal even despite medical intervention. With excellent nutrition, calcium supplementation, and temperature regulation the risk of sand impaction decreases. Millet seed still allows burrowing behavior without being as much of an impaction risk but it can still happen. Reptile carpet or newspaper is still the safest substrate to use as long as ample hides/climbing rocks are provided.

Lighting and Temperature
Uromastyx need a warm place to bask (**110-120 degrees** for this species) 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 65 degrees so a night time heat source is not necessary in most homes. A ceramic heat emitter should be used if it's colder.

UVB lighting is highly recommended. A bulb that specifically provides UVB is necessary as UVB does not penetrate glass or plastic, so having the cage near a window is not adequate. T5 or T8 Zoo Med Reptisun 10.0 or Arcadia 12% are the preferred high quality brands. After about 6 months of use the 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 should be quite low (30% or less) to simulate the arid environment they're native to but it does not need to be 0%. With an appropriate heat source and heat gradient it will be difficult for humidity to accumulate to any significant degree and you will not need to add a humidity source.

Water
Having a water source in the cage is also a subject of debate because humidity is implicated in causing respiratory infections and other health problems. It is a misconception that they do not need water as a desert animal. Having a small bowl of water in the cage will not raise humidity significantly, especially in such a hot cage especially in the dry climate of Colorado. But even in more humid areas a small bowl of water will still not raise humidity enough to warrant this concern. In the wild uromastyx do dwell in humid burrows. The lack of available water can cause chronic low level dehydration which causes kidney disease that we are seeing more and more frequently in captive reptiles as they age. It is best to spray water on their food with each feeding to encourage hydration in addition to having fresh water available at all times in the case they choose to use it. It will not hurt and it may help.

Food
Uromastyx are herbivores and need a variety of high quality vegetables. Uneaten food should be removed after 24 hours. The following is a short list of commonly used food based on nutritional value. Greens should be chopped/torn into large pieces and offered in a shallow bowl like a small salad. Gutloaded insects can be offered occasionally but studies on wild uromastyx indicate insects make up less than 5% of their diet as adults.

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 about once a week)					
					
Sweet Potato	Yellow Squash	Butternut Squash	Bok choy	Kale	Spinach

Avoid These Ingredients (Low in calcium and/or high in phosphorus, oxalates, goitrogens)
Cabbage, iceberg lettuce, broccoli, tomatoes, corn, bread, cereal, meat, eggs, dog food, cat food, fish food, vertebrates (pinkies, lizards).

Supplementation
A powdered calcium supplement (without phosphorus) should be used lightly sprinkled over the food 1-2 times weekly. A multivitamin can be used less frequently (once or twice a month) if desired but with good nutrition this is not always necessary.