

# ***Green Iguana***

## ***“Iguana iguana”***

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Iguanas are one of the most popular reptiles kept today in captivity. They look very much like dragons with their powerful looking head, long tail, and small spikes running on top of their back. They grow up to 6 feet in length and are truly magnificent creatures with their beautiful green coloring and intricate patterns. They are one of the very few lizards that do not require mostly live insects to eat, as iguanas enjoy a much more vegetarian type diet.

### **General Diet:**

Iguanas eat mainly vegetables and some fruits cut to a size that they can easily eat. They also need to get some protein from meats such as cooked egg or insects, especially the younger iguanas. Commercial diets are available that help cover most of an iguana's nutritional needs, and these diets are very easy to use.

### **Vitamins/ Supplements:**

Reptiles need to have a vitamin/mineral supplement with calcium and phosphorous. Most commercial foods will have supplements already added. If not, a supplement should be sprinkled on the adult's food items at every second to third feeding and more often with very young reptiles. We will be glad to explain how often to feed and give supplements to your new pet.

### **Foods to feed:**

Good commercial diets are the best and easiest way to feed your iguana as they include almost everything an iguana needs. However, these commercial diets can and should be supplemented with other foods mentioned below. If a commercial diet is not used, then feed an iguana vegetables as its main diet (about 80%), especially dark leafy greens such as collards, mustard greens, alfalfa sprouts, and spinach.

Some kale, broccoli, turnip greens, carrot, green beans, and squash are good secondary choices. It is best to avoid cabbage. About 15% of their diet can be almost any type of fruit, although stay light or away from bananas. The last 5% should be protein in the form of meat like cooked eggs, insects, or certain brands of dog food.

### **Housing:**

Iguanas get big, so a 20-gallon tank is a good starter for a young iguana, but as they grow they will need a larger and larger container. A full hood or screen can be used on top along with two types of lighting systems. One type of lighting has a reptile fluorescent bulb that gives off full spectrum light including UVA and UVB. The UVB is especially important for these reptiles to get so they can absorb calcium properly. The second light system is for heat. Reptiles are ectotherms, which means they get their heat from an outside source, unlike humans.

Different areas of the habitat should be at different temperatures, so reptiles can move around to heat up or cool off. Iguanas are comfortable with a daytime temperature in their habitat of 86-95 degrees, a nighttime temperature of 76-82, and a basking area of 98-100 degrees. Use a strong daylight heat bulb in a heat lamp during the day to keep the temperature up in their habitat. Use two bulbs if the cage is very large.

If the place you live gets cold at night, use one to two night heat bulb(s) (which give off heat but not much light). One area of the habitat should be a basking area where the iguana can lay and really warm up if wants to during the day then turn off the basking lamp at night. Do not use hot rocks with iguanas.

Iguanas like humidity (60 to 80%) in their habitat and should be misted at least twice daily. Keep a large shallow dish or tray of water to help with humidity in the habitat as well. The dish or tray should be large enough for the iguana to get in and out of easily. Use a shallow sturdy dish for food. Some branches, vines, or other decorations that they can climb should be used in the habitat. Do not use any branches from outside, or you might be introducing pesticides or diseases. Use the appropriate reptile litter or substrate on the bottom.

### **Sanitation/ General Care:**

Change the water every day and clean out the water dish or tray thoroughly twice a week. The litter or substrate used on the bottom should be cleaned as often as needed, and this will depend on habitat size and your pet's size.

### **General Maintenance:**

Mist the tank twice or more daily, depending on how the dry the air is in your area and time of year. Reptiles will shed their skin periodically. Mist them at these times to help them shed the skin more easily. Be sure the habitat is at the right temperature at all times, as a chilled reptile will not eat well or at all and may get sick. Change the reptile full spectrum light as often as recommended by the manufacturer, usually every six months to a year. Although the bulb may still be working, it will lose its potency over a certain period of time.

### **Health Care:**

Iguanas are generally very hardy and healthy when kept in the right conditions. Have your new pet checked out by a reptile veterinarian when first bought for any problems or parasites, just like you would for a puppy or kitten. Then have them checked only if needed due to sickness or injury.

### **Special Section - Handling Precaution:**

Reptiles can carry one disease that can be transmitted to people called salmonellosis. Although it is rare for a reptile to carry this disease, it is always important to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after you have handled your pet or anything in your pet's cage. Keep your pet out of the kitchen area and do not allow very small children to handle any reptiles.

### **Supplies checklist:**

Fish tank (with full hood optional)	Food dish
Screen top (if hood not used)	Reptile litter or other substrate
Fluorescent light with reptile UVB bulb	Branches or other decorations for climbing
Heat lamp with daylight heat bulb	Vitamin/mineral supplement
2nd heat lamp with night heat bulb	Books on Green Iguanas
Water dish or tray	

