



Green Iguana Society

We are dedicated to providing quality information on iguanas care as well as information on current iguana adoptions and rescues throughout the United States and Canada.

www.greenigsociety.org

Green iguanas have become one of the most popular pets, but they have also become one of the most misunderstood. They have many special needs, including specific foods, ultraviolet lighting, high humidity, regular handling and taming, checkups from a qualified herp veterinarian, and many other very important things you should consider before you get a green iguana for a pet. Properly caring for an iguana can be very rewarding and fun, but it can also be very difficult. The Green Iguana Society was formed to help people learn more about how to properly care for their pet iguanas. The information we are providing here is *only* some very basic information on iguanas and iguana care. If you're serious about properly caring for an iguana, please visit our web site. We provide detailed advice on feeding, providing a proper habitat, health and safety issues, quick help and answers to common questions, an interactive message board, adoption and rescue information, a Kids Club aimed at helping kids learn more about iguana care, suggestions about where you can find more information about various topics, and much, much more.

Food & Feeding - Iguanas are herbivores, which means they should only eat greens, vegetables and fruits. Their diet should consist of a wide variety of fresh vegetables such as collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, green beans, orange fleshed squashes, okra, peas, and others. They should also be fed a small amount of fresh fruits such as figs, various melons, raspberries, strawberries, and others. Many vegetables and fruits should be avoided or only fed on occasion, such as spinach, kale, cabbage, broccoli, bok choy, potatoes, corn, most lettuces, and many others. Iguanas should *never* be regularly fed dog or cat food, monkey chow, mice, insects, milk products and other foods that contain animal protein. In addition, we do not recommend that commercial iguana foods be used as a diet staple. Fresh drinking water should also be provided. As you can tell, feeding an iguana is one of the most challenging and time consuming parts of caring for it. Learn as much as you can!

Habitats, Enclosures & Cages - If an iguana is to be kept in an enclosure or cage, it needs to be *very* large. Iguanas can reach six feet in length and can weigh up to 15-20 pounds. The enclosure needs to be large enough to give the iguana room to move around and become comfortable. 8' L x 4' W x 6' H is suitable for a full grown iguana. A heat source such as a basking light, a ceramic heating element, human heating pads wrapped in a towel, or other suitable heating device must be used. Hot rocks and heated branches should not be used for iguanas and can lead to serious burns and even fire. Daytime temperatures should be no cooler than 80°, 85° F on the warm side, with a 90-95° F basking area. Several thermometers should be placed in different locations in the habitat. The habitat should also have proper lighting. Ultraviolet (UVB) light is essential, and we recommend ZooMed's Iguana Light 5.0 or Reptisun 5.0 fluorescent bulbs for regular maintenance. We also recommend Mega-Ray mercury vapor bulbs, especially for sick or gravid iguanas. Mercury vapor bulbs are very powerful and must be used according to directions. UVB lights should not be covered by glass or other material, because the UVB rays will be filtered out. These bulbs should be replaced every six months to a year. The lights in the habitat should be on for only 11-12 hours per day, so the iguana can have a day/night cycle of light and dark. Humidity should be high and can be increased by spraying the habitat with a spray bottle several times daily or by using a humidifier. Never use particulate substrate (bedding or flooring). Artificial turf, paper or terry cloth towels, unprinted newspaper, or vinyl flooring is recommended. Providing a suitable habitat for an iguana can be very expensive, and this should be considered if you're thinking about getting an iguana.

Sunlight - Ultraviolet light is *very* important to maintain healthy bones. A very common disease in iguanas is called Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and can be prevented and often times cured with a calcium rich diet, unfiltered UVB light, and proper temperatures. The absolute best source of UVB light is direct sunlight. Providing an outdoor sunning cage and supervised time outside is highly recommended.

Freedom & Free Roaming - Many iguana owners allow their iguanas to roam freely in a specific room or area of their homes. This can be a very good way to make sure the iguana has enough room, but heat and proper light must still be provided. Freedom and free roaming should be allowed only under supervision and in an area of the house that has been “iguana-proofed” to prevent accidents and escapes.

Cleaning and cleanliness - Regular cleaning is absolutely essential when owning an iguana! This includes regular cleaning of the enclosure, food and water bowls, and substrate. *Salmonella*, a bacteria that can be spread to humans, can be very harmful to you and your family if proper hygiene is not practiced regularly. Always wash your hands after handling an iguana and always clean up the habitat every day. If there are infants, pregnant women, or other people that are easily susceptible to illness in the home, you should use *extreme* caution when iguanas or other reptiles are present.

Miscellaneous care - There are many other things that should be done when owning an iguana. Iguanas have very sharp claws which should be trimmed on a regular basis. Regular baths or soaking the iguana in a tub of warm water is also recommended. Baths will help the iguana shed as well as provide more humidity and water for it.

Taming - Many iguanas, with regular handling and taming sessions, will become very tame, much like any other house pet. Iguanas are wild animals, and they will usually stay wild if they are not handled regularly and tamed properly. It's also very common for adult iguanas, especially males, to become very aggressive - particularly during breeding season. A large iguana is capable of seriously injuring people by biting and tail whipping. When iguanas get older, even very tame ones, the owner should use extreme caution and be aware that they can become very aggressive.

Health & Safety - Along with being careful about your own health and safety by being cautious about *Salmonella* and aggressiveness, it's very important to be concerned about the health and safety of your iguana. Just as you would with a dog, cat or other pet, you should take your iguana to the vet for regular checkups. New iguanas should definitely be taken to a qualified herp vet to be examined for parasites and other problems. Many vets do not treat iguanas, so it's important to look around for a qualified herp vet. Regular checkups should be done at least once per year.

Where to learn more - Once again, these are only the basics on how to care for an iguana. Properly caring for an iguana can be very expensive and time consuming. Building or buying a suitable enclosure or habitat, buying and preparing fresh food, regular cleaning, vet visits, and many other things can be more costly and time consuming than most people anticipate. If you're considering an iguana for a pet, make sure you can afford it, make sure you have the time to care for it, and most importantly, learn as much as possible about iguanas and iguana care *before* you get one. The Green Iguana Society's web site is full of information on how to care for iguanas, and we also list many other web sites where you can learn more. Below is a list of a few web sites and the only two iguana care books we recommend.

Recommended Web Sites

The Green Iguana Society - <http://www.greenigsociety.org>
Melissa Kaplan's Herp and Iguana Care Information Collection - <http://www.anapsid.org/>
Jennifer Swofford's Iguana Pages - <http://www.baskingspot.com/iguanas/index.html>
Wong's Green Iguana Heaven - <http://mail.milagros.net/caiman>
Napoleon The Iguana's Home Page - <http://www.icomm.ca/dragon/napoleon.htm>

Recommended Books

Green Iguana - The Ultimate Owner's Manual - by James W. Hatfield, ISBN 1883463483
Iguanas for DUMMIES - by Melissa Kaplan, ISBN 0764552600

Questions? E-mail us at questions@greenigsociety.org

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