

Basic Information Sheet: Uromastyx

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Uromastyx (*Uromastyx spp.*)



Natural history

Uromastyx spp. are also known as dabb lizards or spiny-tailed lizards. This latter name comes from its thick, short tail covered with large, spiny scales. The Moroccan spiny-tailed lizard or agama is native to the deserts of northern Africa. Colorful specimens of the pet trade are often captured from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania. The range of the ornate spiny-tailed agama is restricted to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.

Wild-caught animals are more common than captive bred in the pet trade, this is particularly true for the ornate spiny-tailed agama.

Taxonomy

Class: *Reptilia*

Order: *Squamata*

Family: *Agamidae* –
bearded dragons, frilled
lizards, water dragons

Uromastix

acanthinurus:

Moroccoan spiny-tailed
lizard

Uromastix aegyptis:

Egyptian spiny-tailed
lizard

U. ocellatus ornatus:

ornate spiny-tailed
agama

Color and Size

- Moroccan spiny-tailed agamas are red, orange, yellow, bright green, or a combination of these colors. The colors of this lizard will intensify with age. Adults may reach 15-17 in (38-43 cm) in length.
- The ornate spiny-tailed agama has a tan ground color with yellow and turquoise crossbands and a turquoise head. Adults are 10-14 in (25-35 cm) long.
- Egyptian spiny-tailed lizards are the largest members of the genus. Total length may equal 30 in (76 cm). The juvenile is light gray-brown with yellow bars on spots on the back. The adult turns from black to white or yellow as it warms up.

Diet

- Feed dark, leafy greens and grasses such as bok choy and spring salad mix, as the bulk (~70%) of the diet. Mix salad greens with vegetables like corn, squash, carrots, sweet potato, cucumber, zucchini, green peppers, parsley, peas, and beans as well as hay and birdseed. Dried lentils, dried and fresh peas are often favorite foods. Uromastyx may be fed insects occasionally. Fruit like melons or berries and blossoms such as hibiscus leaves, flowers, and mulberry leaves can also be an occasional treat.
- Dust the non-breeding adult's diet with a calcium carbonate or calcium gluconate supplement once weekly. Calcium supplements should be devoid or low in phosphorus with a minimum Ca:P ratio of 2:1. A general vitamin/mineral supplement may also be offered once weekly.
- Feed juveniles daily and adults every 1-3 days
- For more information, download the client handout: [Feeding Insect Eating Reptiles](#).

Husbandry

Temperature	Maintain a temperature gradient of 80-100°F (27-38°C). Offer a basking spot of 120°F (49°C). During the winter months the temperature
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	<p>of this basking area should be lowered to around 100-110°F (38-43°C). Provide a 10-15°F (5-8°C) drop in temperature at night. These high temperatures are essential for the health of <i>Uromastyx</i> spp. and are achieved by utilizing heaters and powerful light bulbs, which often create fire hazards in the home.</p>
Humidity/water	<p>The humidity level should be from 10-40%. A dehumidifier may be necessary in many regions. Although it may not be used, a water dish should be offered as long as its presence does not raise humidity levels. Most <i>Uromastyx</i> species come from areas with less than 2 inches (5 cm) of rainfall annually. The majority of</p>

	<p>the water needed is obtained from the foods they consume.</p>
<p>Cage size and design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a 60-gallon (227-L) or larger aquarium or terrarium.• Experts often debate the best substrate for Uromastyx. Newspaper or butcher paper is easy to clean, but does not allow burrowing. Sand is popular, but there is some risk of ingestion and subsequent impaction. Select processed non-silica based sands as they are relatively dust free and ensure adequate dietary calcium intake to minimize the risk of foreign body ingestion.

Cage furniture/supplies	Provide a full-spectrum light source for normal absorption of dietary calcium and hide boxes.
Social structure	One male may be housed with one to three females year round. Females can also exhibit territorial behavior so monitor groups carefully for signs of aggression.

Lifespan

Approximately 15-20 years
Sexually mature Spiny-tailed lizards are over 18-24 months of age.

Anatomy/ physiology

Dermatologic:	Unlike snakes, lizards normally exhibit a patchy shed or “ecdysis”.
Respiratory:	Lizards have incomplete tracheal rings.
Urogenital:	A renal portal system is present. Agamas possess a thin-walled bladder.
Miscellaneous:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nasal salt glands excrete excess sodium. Agamas “sneeze” clear

fluid, which later dries as a fine, white powder.

- Fat pads are present within the caudoventral coelom.
- The mouths of most Uromastyx are extremely difficult to open and teeth may be damaged by use of strong oral specula therefore owners may be unable to administer oral medications.

Sexual dimorphism:

- Adult males are larger and more robust. A hemipenile bulge is usually seen just below the vent (or the opening to the cloaca). The hemipenes are the copulatory organ of the male.
- Mature males should also have prominent [femoral pores](#) on the ventral thighs. A waxy glandular secretion is

	<p>secreted from these pores.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some species, such as the Ornate Spiny-tailed lizard and the Mali Spiny-tailed lizard (<i>Uromastyx maliensis</i>), are sexually dichromatic. Males are more brightly colored.
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Restraint

Uromastyx are usually mild tempered, friendly lizards but they are capable of inflicting a painful bite and the well-armored tail may be used as a defensive weapons. Although these lizards do not possess tail autotomy, never hold a *Uromastyx* by the tail.

Venipuncture

Ventral tail (coccygeal) vein
 Ventral abdominal vein

Preventive medicine

Regular physical examination
 Fecal parasite testing
 Quarantine

Important medical conditions

- Endoparasitism
- Nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism or metabolic bone disease
- Cachexia due to poor food intake caused by lack of hot enough temperatures.
- Failure of fresh imports to thrive, probably due to excess chilling,

dehydration and starvation, and parasitism.

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