

Blue Tongue Skink Care

CAPTIVE CARE SHEET SPECIES: BLUE TONGUE SKINKS

Tiliqua gigas, *scincoides*, *intermedia*

A GOOD CHOICE OF LIZARD FOR THE BEGINNER.

Grows to a maximum length of 50 cm

DISTRIBUTION: Australia and Indonesia

HOUSING: The size of the housing depends on the size of the animal. A hatchling would want about 24 x 12 inches, this allows it to find its food easily. Adults require 36 x 18 inches. This can support up to three animals (1 male, 2 females). Hides could be decorative piles of rocks, bark tubes or cardboard boxes. The lizards should be kept at 25- 35C with a drop of up to 10C at night. Localised heating using a heat mat which covers 1/2 of the floor area should be adequate. The substrates which can be utilised are sand, bark chippings or sawdust. Humidity may be maintained by spraying the vivarium twice a week. UV light is required occasionally even if Calcium and D3 supplements are given.

DIET: Water should always be available in low sturdy dishes to avoid spillage's. diet can consist of insects, snails, pinkie mice, lean meat, tinned cat food, fish, eggs, cockles fruit and vegetables. The animals will require feeding 3 or 4 times a week. The food sources should be sprinkled with vitamin supplements and calcium in the form of ground cuttlefish bone.

BREEDING: If raised properly, captive bred tongued skinks will breed at about 2 old. The animals must be healthy, they have a good fat store in their tail. Females may be kept together in breeding groups, but only one male should be present. Males, generally have wider heads and their bodies when viewed from above has straight sides Females have a less bulky head and more rounded sides This is not often obvious and the only sure way is to wait and see give birth. The breeding season is January early spring to induce breeding they should be cooled to 13-18C for 2 months. Mating will take place within a few weeks of warming. The males often become aggressive during mating and fights may break out. It is usually better to keep the animals separate and bring them together to mate. This will usually occur immediately and the pair can be separated again. It is better to reintroduce the animals on a regular basis as single matings are seldom successful. During mating the male bites the female around the neck, this will result in bite marks and torn skin. The male will twist his tail under the females to enable mating to occur.

Blue tongue skinks are live bearing, the females usually produce about 5-12 babies, the larger the adult the larger the litter size.

The gestation period is generally around 100 days, this is dependent on temperature and some species tend to have a longer period than others, typically the larger types.

The babies are about 15cm at birth and will grow rapidly with proper feeding and vitamin supplements. Care should be taken when raising juveniles together as larger babies will eat all the food and smaller individuals will be victimised.

SUITABILITY: Generally these lizards are better pets than the larger Iguanids, Agamids and monitors. They have a much calmer disposition, shorter claws and do not grow as large. The omnivorous diet may also be a reason to keep a Blue Tongue in preference to a Green Iguana or Bosc Monitor.

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REFERENCES: E.Zimmermann(1986) Breeding Terrarium Animals

C.Mattison(1991) Keeping and Breeding Lizards.

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