



Uromastyx

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

The **Uromastyx** (*Uromastyx spp*), also known as Spiny Tail Lizard, is native to Northern Africa to the Middle East. They are mostly terrestrial burrowing animals that require many places to hide. There are several different species in the pet trade, all varying in different colors and sizes. To determine the sex of these species, usually the males have a much larger tail base and more pronounced femoral pores.

Mali Uromastyx (*Uromastyx maliensis*): Malis are one of the most common uros kept as pet. When the males reach adulthood, they become almost entirely black and develop bright yellow coloration on their backs. The males range from 13-16" when full grown. The females will remain a dark brown or black color and are a little smaller at 11-14".

Egyptian Uromastyx (*Uromastyx aegypticus*): The Egyptian Uromastyx is one of the largest at 24-36." Their coloration varies between grey and tan. They are also said to be one of the more docile uros.

Ornate Uromastyx (*Uromastyx ornate*): The Ornate Uromastyx is not as common as the Malis or Egyptian uros. The males come in a variety of colors from blues to greens to pinks and the females tend to be a duller version of the males. They are about 10-14" at maturity.

Temperature range: 85-130°F

DIET

Vegetables: The majority of the diet should consist of dark leafy greens such as collard greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens, chard, kale, parsley, and bok choy. Some vegetables can also be offered such as carrots or squash. Avoid spinach in large quantities. Spinach contains high concentrations of oxalates, which can inhibit the uptake of calcium. Also avoid iceberg and romaine lettuce because they have little nutritional value. It is not recommended to feed peas because they are too high in phosphorus.

Fruit: Occasional. They enjoy a variety of berries, such as raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries.

Seed: Occasional. Some species can have occasional seed such as millet.

ENVIRONMENT

Uromastyx should be kept in a cage that provides them with plenty of space to move around, dig, and hide.

Lighting: A specific wavelength of light called UVB. It is required for the proper absorption of calcium. We recommend Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by ZooMed. Leave UVB bulbs on for 14 hours a day, and make sure that the bulb is not filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs need to be changed every 6 months because the amount of UVB light emitted decreases over

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time.

Heat: Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs. The temperature gradient should be 110-130°F on the hot end and 85-95°F on the cool end. Keep a thermometer at basking level on the hot end of the enclosure, and at ground level on the cool end. Never use heat rocks or heating pads, as they can cause severe burns.

Substrate: Use paper-based bedding, such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News. Millet is also a good choice of bedding but make sure it is changed regularly and is kept dry to avoid growth of mold and fungus. Coconut fiber is also okay if it is allowed to dry completely after initial wetting. Avoid all types of sand, including Calcisand. Sand is often ingested, causing blockages in the intestines.

Enclosure: Provide plenty of hide areas such as logs and rocks.

MEDICAL CARE

Exams: A yearly exam and blood panel are recommended. Additionally, fecal tests may be recommended.

Common Illnesses:

Parasitic Infections: Symptoms include: loss of appetite, inability to gain weight, and slow growth. Diagnosis is by performing a fecal test to check for parasites. Treatment includes administering an oral anti-parasitic medication and repeating fecal tests. Parasites are not transmitted from food but from one reptile's feces to another. If there is more than one lizard in a cage, most likely they will all have parasites.

Impaction (Intestinal Blockage): This condition is almost always caused by the ingestion of foreign objects or sand. Symptoms include: loss of appetite and inability to produce stools. Uromastix exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away. Treatment can be difficult and often requires hospitalization. Avoiding the use of sand can prevent this problem!

Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism (Metabolic Bone Disease): This condition is caused by improper nutrition and lack of UVB lighting. Symptoms include: limb and jaw deformities, muscle twitching, lethargy, lack of appetite, and difficulty eating. Uromastix exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away.