



Tegu Care: Life span: 15-20 years

Vital Statistics:

- **Body length:** Adults can grow up to 5 feet, and weight up to 35lbs
- **Age at sexual maturity:** 3 years
- **Location:** Throughout South America
- **Habitat:** Rainforest, savannah, and grasslands
- **What sex is your Tegu?** Males are generally larger, and display prominent jowls under the chin.

What your veterinarian looks for in a healthy tegu:

- Bright, alert and responsive attitude
- Mouth pink, clear of excessive saliva
- Eyes open, clear and symmetrical
- Nostrils free of discharge or excessive bubbles
- Head symmetrical with no swellings
- Good leg muscles
- Skin should be smooth, even in texture without wounds present

What to expect from your tegu:

Tegus are very intelligent, and with this comes potential for being escape artists. With regular handling, they can be quite sociable with the owners and even docile. They appear similar to monitors but have some slight differences including the ability to drop their tail (autotomy).

What should you feed your tegu?

Young, hatchling tegus should be primarily fed insects with some fruit and the occasional pinky mouse (once weekly). They should be fed daily up until they are a year of age. Typically, gut loaded insects such as crickets, king mealworms, earthworms, roaches, grasshoppers, silk worms and waxworms can be offered.

Yearling tegus and those under 3 years of age should be fed every other day. Their diet should start to include more whole prey such as frozen thawed mice. In addition, other animal protein can consist of lean meat (ground turkey, fish), eggs and other insects. Fruits can still be offered at this stage.

Adult tegus are omnivores and consume both animal protein, insects and fruit. They should be fed every 2-3 three days. The bulk of an adult tegu's diet should contain rodents, occasional day-old chick, as well as insects, eggs, and fish. Pieces of cooked chicken can also be offered as a treat. Fruit should be fed less it can lead to obesity. Tegus require a water bowl that is easy to drink from as well as large enough to bathe in. We recommend soaking at least twice a week to aide in shedding.



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Calcium Supplementation:

In the wild, animals synthesize their own vitamin D when exposed to sunlight, which in turn helps their body absorb calcium. Calcium is needed for proper development of bones and shells, as well as normal cell function (including muscles and the gastrointestinal tract). Reptiles kept indoors with little access to natural sunlight or artificial UVB light and with improper calcium in their diet are susceptible to developing a condition known as metabolic bone disease.

- We **RECOMMEND** providing calcium carbonate (without vitamin D3) in the form of a powder, which can be added **DAILY** to your pet's diet.
- We **RECOMMEND** brands such as Rep Cal, as they provide instructions on how much calcium should be added.
- We **DO NOT** recommend just "sprinkling" the calcium supplement onto food as the exact volume being given is not known.
- A multivitamin can be substituted once weekly and used instead of a calcium supplement to provide added vitamins and minerals, especially to help in the prevention of Vitamin A deficiency.

How to house your tegu:

Enclosure:

Bigger is always better when it comes to house tegus. Young tegus can do well with a 20-40 gallon tank but once they are 1-2 years of age a custom made enclosure is recommended. The enclosure should be at least twice the length of the lizard (including the tail) and the width should be at least the full length of the lizard. In general, adults will require dimensions of at least 6-8 x 3-4 x 3 feet. The enclosure should be sturdy and escape proof.

Recommended substrates include newspaper (easy to clean), reptile carpet/tile, as particulate substrate can be difficult to clean and pose a risk of impaction if accidentally ingested. Tegus do well with access to a dig box for burrowing. This should be an area of the enclosure with top soil or "EcoEarth" and should be at least 2 feet deep. All substrates should be cleaned/changed every 1-2 weeks and spot cleaned daily.

Temperatures:

Tegus typically require daytime temperatures of 80-86 degrees F with a basking area of 100-110 degrees F. Night time temperatures should stay above 70 degrees F. If your night temperatures do necessitate a heat source, it is important to use one that does not emit light, such as a ceramic heat emitter utilized from a safe distance to avoid burning your bearded dragon. To maintain correct temperatures, heating lamps that provide UVB lighting for calcium absorption are recommended and temperatures should be continuously monitored with thermometers. Thermometers must be strategically placed on both ends of the tank and checked frequently. Tegus thrive at humidity levels of 75-90% and a hydrometer is recommended.

Lighting & UVB supplementation:

Reptiles require UV supplementation for the metabolism of Vitamin D3 and calcium absorption. Without this supplementation, reptiles are at risk of developing a condition called nutritional metabolic bone disease, which can be life threatening. Most bulbs sold for use in reptiles provide both UV-A and UV-B. Examples of commercially available UV-B emitting lights are the Retisun™, Iguana Light™, Power Sun™ (by Zoo Med), and Repti Glo™ lamp by Exo Terra. The UV output of these lights decreases with age, so they should be replaced every six months or as directed by the manufacturer. For UV light to work, it must reach the pet in an unfiltered form, which means that



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you must make sure there is *no glass or plastic* between the pet and the light. The light should be within 6-12 inches from the animal in order for the pet to receive any benefit. Regular exposure to natural DIRECT sunlight outside (unfiltered through glass) is encouraged and recommended whenever possible. When outdoor care must be taken, provide a shaded area for the tegu to escape the sun if it chooses. Your pet should always be supervised if taken outside to bask in the sun to prevent escape or attack from other roaming animals in the neighborhood.

Tips for a happy, healthy animal:

- Providing as large an enclosure as possible helps provide stimulation and exercise for captive reptiles.
- Providing different levels, rocks, branches, plants, and substrates within the enclosure can encourage climbing, burrowing, and other more natural behaviors.
- Some animals can be trained to forage for their food, which provides exercise and mental stimulation.
 - Live insects for insectivores

Salmonella:

- Reptiles naturally carry the bacteria Salmonella naturally on their skin. For this reason one must thoroughly wash their hands after handling or cleaning a reptile's enclosure and surfaces that may have been in contact with the animal. Children and immunosuppressed individuals should be discouraged from contact with reptiles to minimize risk of infection.
- Symptoms of Salmonella in people range from diarrhea, fever, stomach pain, vomiting which may require hospitalization. Always wash your hands after handling reptiles.

Schedule of veterinary care:

Annual physical examinations are recommended as tegus are very good at hiding signs of illness. By performing a health check every year, we are able to assess weight, check husbandry conditions and perform testing to help with early disease prevention. Many of the most common diseases in tegus are preventable through good husbandry and nutrition.

Common signs of illness in Bearded Dragons include:

- Lethargy, weakness and decreased appetite
- Tremors, shaking or seizures
- Eye or sinus swelling or discharge
- Limb swelling, toenail loss or lameness
- Thick mucus inside the mouth
- Straining to lay eggs, or only laying a couple at a time
- Prolapsed tissue from the vent
- Diarrhea

If you notice any of these signs please have your bearded assessed by a reptile veterinarian