

WALNUT CREEK SUPPLY

THE COMPLETE CARE GUIDE

Uromastyx

A desert herbivore that needs serious heat and almost no humidity



Family-owned in Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania
10% of every purchase supports no-kill animal shelters nationwide
13 sections · walnutcreeksupply.com

CONTENTS

What's Inside

-
- 01 **Quick Start: Your First 48 Hours**
-
- 02 **Meet Your Uromastyx**
-
- 03 **Enclosure Setup & Layout**
-
- 04 **Substrate Guide**
-
- 05 **Heat, UVB & Humidity — The 3 Numbers**
-
- 06 **Diet & Nutrition**
-
- 07 **Shedding & Brumation**
-
- 08 **Common Challenges & Solutions**
-
- 09 **Handling**
-
- 10 **Routine Care Calendar**
-
- 11 **When to See a Vet**
-
- 12 **FAQ**
-
- 13 **Every Purchase Gives Back**

New owner? Go straight to Section 1. It is written so you can set up a safe, correct home and get through the first 48 hours without reading anything else first.

*Spend an hour watching a uromastyx on a cold morning and you will understand why people fall for them. The lizard emerges from its burrow dark and slow, climbs onto a hot rock, flattens its body toward the lamp, and just soaks up warmth until the colors come up like a sunrise. Then it ambles over to a pile of dandelion greens and eats the flowers first. Uromastyx (say it yoo-roh-MASS-tix) are also called spiny-tailed lizards, and they are **herbivores** — animals that eat plants and nothing else — built for the hottest, driest corners of North Africa and the Middle East. They are calm, curious, long-lived, and genuinely different from the bearded dragons and leopard geckos most people start with. They are also easy to keep wrong, because almost everything about their care runs against a beginner's instincts: the heat is far hotter than you expect, the air is far drier, the food is a salad and a seed mix with no crickets in sight, and the lizard will live for **15 to 25 years**. This guide is written so you get those few big things right from the first day. Read the Quick Start first, confirm which species you actually have, and build the enclosure before the lizard comes home. Do that, and you will be rewarded with one of the most peaceful, characterful reptiles in the hobby.*

SECTION 1

Quick Start: Your First 48 Hours

1. **Confirm your species before you buy a single piece of equipment.** "Uromastyx" is a whole genus, and adult size ranges from roughly 8 to 12 inches (Saharan or Geyri) through 12 to 16 inches (Ornate, Mali, Moroccan) to 30 inches or more (Egyptian). Ask the seller for the scientific name and write it down. Everything below, from enclosure size to basking temperature, shifts a little with species, so this one fact shapes every other purchase.
2. **Build the complete enclosure and run it for several days before the lizard arrives.** The minimum for a mid-size species is 4' × 2' × 2' (four feet long, two feet deep, two feet tall), and bigger is better. Longer matters more than taller, because uromastyx live on the floor and need a long temperature gradient. An Egyptian uromastyx needs substantially more room. Use a secure, well-ventilated lid.
3. **Set up your heat and prove it with a thermometer.** The **basking surface** — the exact spot, usually the top of a flat rock or slate, where the lizard lies to warm up — should read **120–135°F**, depending on species. That is surface temperature, not air temperature, and you measure it with an infrared temperature gun. Warm-side air should be **100–110°F**, the cool end **80–85°F**, and night **70–75°F**. A **thermostat is mandatory**, and so is a barrier that keeps the lizard from touching the bulb.
4. **Install the UVB lighting and run it on a timer.** Uromastyx need strong UVB, in **Ferguson zone 3–4**. The Ferguson zone system rates reptiles by how much ultraviolet light their wild habitat gives them, from zone 1 (shade dwellers) to zone 4 (open-sun basking desert animals). Uromastyx are right at the sun-loving end. A T5 HO tube or a mercury vapour bulb, mounted at the distance on the manufacturer's chart, is the correct choice. Run it 12 to 14 hours a day in summer and 10 to 12 in winter.
5. **Keep it dry.** Target **10–30% humidity**, checked with a digital hygrometer. Do not mist the enclosure, do not add a humid hide, and do not add a fogger. Damp air is a leading cause of respiratory and skin trouble in this genus.
6. **Pack the substrate and build a burrow.** Uromastyx dig, and a lizard with a tunnel to retreat into is a calmer, healthier lizard. Use a firmly packed mix of play sand and organic topsoil deep enough to hold a tunnel, or a bare tile or slate floor with sturdy hides on top. This is a real debate because of **impaction**, a blockage in the gut caused by swallowed material, and the Substrate Guide below walks through it honestly.
7. **Offer the right first meal.** Fresh dandelion greens (and dandelion flowers if you have them), collards, or mustard greens, dusted lightly with plain calcium powder, plus a spoonful of a dry seed mix. **No insects as an adult, no animal protein, no fruit as a regular item.** Too much protein stresses the kidneys and can cause **gout**, a painful buildup of uric acid crystals in the joints and organs.

8. **Let the lizard settle for three to five days.** Expect it to dive into the burrow and stay there. Provide quiet food and water checks and nothing more. Handling can wait until it eats and basks confidently.
9. **Wash your hands every time.** Like most reptiles, uromastyx can carry Salmonella without being sick themselves. Wash with soap for at least 20 seconds after touching the lizard, the food dishes, or anything inside the enclosure.
10. **Find an exotic veterinarian now, before you need one.** Ask whether they see lizards, and book a first visit with a fresh stool sample within the first two weeks, especially if your animal was wild-caught. Tape the clinic number and the after-hours number to the enclosure.

First-Time Starter Bundle

What needs to be in the house on day one, and what to look for in each category.

Essentials

- **A long, secure enclosure sized to the species** — at least 4' × 2' × 2' for mid-size species, larger for Egyptian. Wood, PVC, or a front-opening reptile cabinet hold heat best and keep the interior dry. Make sure it has a lid or top that locks and ventilation that does not leave the whole thing drafty.
- **A high-output basking heat source** — a halogen flood or similar high-wattage basking bulb in a ceramic-socket dome fixture, or a mercury vapour bulb that gives both heat and UVB, mounted so it can heat a flat basking surface to the target range.
- **A thermostat matched to the heat source** — a dimming thermostat for halogen or incandescent basking bulbs, and a pulse-proportional thermostat for ceramic heat emitters. This is not optional equipment. Match the type to the heater (see the Heat, UVB & Humidity section) and place the probe at the basking surface.
- **A UVB source rated for Ferguson zone 3–4** — a T5 HO linear tube with a reflector, or a mercury vapour bulb, sized to span the basking area. Check the manufacturer's chart for mounting distance and replacement schedule.
- **A bulb guard or protective cage** — keeps the lizard from touching a bulb that may exceed 300°F at the glass.
- **A flat basking rock or slate** — thick, stable, wide enough for the whole body, and positioned so the surface can reach target temperature under the lamp.
- **An infrared temperature gun** — the only reliable way to measure a basking surface.
- **Two digital probe thermometers and a digital hygrometer** — one probe at warm-side air level, one at the cool end, and the hygrometer at mid-enclosure height.
- **A packed sand-and-topsoil mix, or tile or slate flooring** — chosen deliberately after reading the Substrate Guide, not by default.
- **A burrow structure** — a sturdy cave, a slate-and-rock tunnel, or a half-buried hide large enough for the lizard to turn around in, anchored so it cannot collapse.
- **A shallow, heavy food dish and a shallow water dish** — small, stable, and easy to clean.
- **Plain calcium powder without D3 and a reptile multivitamin** — the two core supplements for the schedule in the Diet section.
- **A dry seed mix and fresh greens** — the diet itself should be in the house before the lizard is.

Ready to set up? Browse the essentials in our collections: Reptile and Amphibian Enclosures and Reptile and Amphibian Terrarium Supplies & Accessories.

Enrichment

- **Rocks, slate stacks, and ledges at varied heights** — uromastyx climb a little and love an elevated lookout. Everything stacked must be secured so a digging lizard cannot bring it down.
- **A deep digging area** — a section of substrate several inches deeper than the rest, where the lizard can excavate a real tunnel.
- **A background on the back and side walls** — a printed or painted backing or a sealed rock panel reduces glass reflections and makes the animal feel sheltered.
- **Edible plants and flowers** — pesticide-free dandelions and hibiscus, grown for the lizard, add food and variety.
- **A secure travel carrier** — a small, ventilated, opaque carrier with a towel for vet trips, kept dry and out of drafts.

Enrichment, one click away. Shop Reptile and Amphibian Accessories.

SECTION 2

Meet Your Uromastyx

Wild uromastyx live across the deserts and arid rocky scrublands of North Africa and the Middle East — from Morocco, Algeria and Mali through Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. They are **burrowers** and **sun-worshippers**. At night and through the coldest hours of the morning they sit deep in a tunnel, sometimes with the spiked tail plugging the entrance like a cork. When the sun climbs, they come out, lean into it with their bodies flattened, and wait until they are hot enough to forage. They graze on flowers, leaves, and seeds of desert plants, and they take almost all their water from that food. The stocky, armored, flat-bodied shape you see in the pet trade makes sense out there: it is a tiny fortress that happens to love lunch.

Trait	Detail
Common name	Uromastyx; spiny-tailed lizard; dabb lizard
Genus	<i>Uromastyx</i>
Native range	North Africa and the Middle East, including the Sahara and Arabian deserts
Wild habitat	Rocky desert, arid scrub, semi-desert, hillsides with burrows
Hatchling size	3–4 inches total length, depending on species
Adult length	8–12 inches (Geyri); 12–16 inches (Ornate, Mali, Moroccan); up to 30+ inches (Egyptian)
Typical lifespan	15–25 years with good care
Activity pattern	Diurnal — active in daytime, basks heavily, retreats to burrow to cool or sleep
Social structure	Solitary — one per enclosure; males fight
Temperament	Calm and curious once settled; rarely bites; defends by puffing up and blocking its burrow
Diet	Herbivore — greens, flowers and seeds . Adults do not need insects

The common pet species

Five species make up most of what is sold. They share the same basic needs — extreme heat, strong UVB, dry air, a burrow, and a plant-and-seed diet — but they differ in size and in how much heat they like, so confirm which one you have.

Species	Common name	Typical adult length	Notes for keepers
<i>Uromastyx ornata</i>	Ornate	12–16 inches	The most colorful and popular pet species. Males can show bright red, yellow, green and blue patterning when warm.
<i>Uromastyx maliensis</i>	Mali	12–16 inches	Often yellow, olive and cream with dark mottling. Comfortable with high basking temperatures.
<i>Uromastyx acanthinura</i>	Moroccan (Bell's, North African)	12–16 inches	Often orange, rust or yellow with dark patterning; a hardy and widely kept species.

Species	Common name	Typical adult length	Notes for keepers
<i>Uromastyx geyri</i>	Saharan, Geyri, Red uromastyx	8–12 inches	The smallest species. Delicate when young and a specialist; do not start here as a first lizard.
<i>Uromastyx aegyptia</i>	Egyptian	30 inches or more	The largest. Needs a much bigger enclosure and a keeper prepared for a big animal. Rarely appropriate for a first-time keeper.

Hatchlings of every species look alike to an untrained eye, so if the label is vague, ask the breeder to name the species in writing, and have an exotic vet confirm if you are unsure.

The desert lifestyle, and why it shapes everything

Think of a uromastyx's day as a heating cycle. In the wild, the temperature under the sand can differ from the temperature on top of a baking rock by more than 50 degrees. The lizard moves between them constantly, warming up on the surface, cooling down in the tunnel. In your home, you are recreating that cycle with lamps, a thermostat and a burrow. Two practical consequences follow: **a uromastyx that is too cool cannot digest, fight infection, or keep eating**, and **one that is too damp cannot breathe or shed comfortably**. Heat and dryness are the center of its care.

Wild uromastyx also slow down in the cooler, shorter days of winter. That seasonal slowdown, where the lizard eats less, spends more time in its burrow, and may sleep for long stretches, is called **brumation**. Brumation is the reptile version of hibernation, but lighter: the animal is dormant rather than deeply asleep. We cover how to tell healthy brumation from illness in the Shedding & Brumation section.

Color change with temperature

Uromastyx change color all day long, and watching it is half the fun. A cold lizard looks dull — gray, brown, or washed out — because darker colors help absorb heat. As it warms up, the colors lift into yellow, orange, red, green or blue, depending on species and sex. Males are generally more vivid. The color change is a thermometer you can read at a glance: a lizard that stays dark and dull under a working lamp is not warm enough, or not well. A lizard glowing at midday and retreating into a pale, sleepy tone at night is doing exactly what it should.

Temperament

Once settled, uromastyx are among the most placid of the commonly kept lizards. They rarely bite. Their defense is theatrical rather than violent: they puff their bodies up, hiss, back into a burrow, and use the spiked tail as a plug and a club. A well-kept uromastyx often learns to recognize its keeper, wait at the front of the enclosure at feeding time, and walk calmly onto a hand. They are not cuddly like a dog; they are observant, deliberate, and quietly personable.

Wild-caught versus captive-bred

Many uromastyx in the pet trade are **wild-caught imports**. Wild-caught animals are stressed by capture and transport and often arrive with internal parasites, particularly pinworms, plus dehydration and low weight. Many do not adapt, refuse food, and decline. **Captive-bred** animals are the strong choice: they are used to a captive diet and a home environment, they are healthier on arrival, and buying them avoids pulling more animals from fragile desert populations (the whole genus is listed under CITES, the international wildlife trade agreement). Ask the seller where the animal came from, ask how old it is, and ask for a record of its feeding. If you do bring home a wild-caught animal, plan on a vet fecal exam in the first two weeks and extra patience in the first month.

What surprises new owners

Four things catch most new keepers off guard. The first is the **heat**: a 130°F basking surface sounds extreme and feels alarming, but it is correct for the species, and a lizard kept at the "reptile normal" 95°F will slowly fail. The second is the **dryness**: new keepers who grew up on humid-tropics advice instinctively want to mist, and in this case that does harm. The third is the **salt**: uromastyx clear excess salt through glands near the nostrils and flick it out in small white puffs or leave crusty white flecks around the nose. This "salt sneeze" is normal and is not a respiratory infection. The fourth is **how long they live**. A hatchling you bring home today may still be on your shelf in two decades. Plan for the long haul.

SECTION 3

Enclosure Setup & Layout

How big, and what it is made of

The working minimum for a mid-size species (Ornate, Mali, Moroccan) is 4' × 2' × 2'. Treat that as the floor, not the goal: a 5' or 6' long enclosure gives you a better heat gradient, more room to dig, and a lizard that behaves more naturally. The Saharan (Geyri) can live in a slightly smaller space as an adult, but it is a delicate species and still does best in a full-size setup. The Egyptian uromastyx, which can top 30 inches, needs something closer to 6' × 3' × 3' **at a bare minimum**, and larger is better. Hatchlings can start in a smaller enclosure, but they grow fast, and many keepers skip the juvenile setup and go straight to the adult enclosure with a few small, secure areas inside.

Floor space and substrate depth matter more than height. Uromastyx do not climb the way a chameleon does. They want a long, flat run, a rock to scramble onto, and enough depth underfoot to dig. A wide, long enclosure also allows a proper gradient, which is the whole game with this species.

Wooden or PVC vivariums, with a front-opening door, are the best choice. They hold heat well, they stay dry inside, and a lizard approached from the front sees you as a visitor and not a predator coming from above. Glass tanks work, but they lose heat quickly, and top-opening lids can stress the lizard. Whatever you choose, ventilation must be adequate without making the enclosure drafty. Cross-ventilation helps keep humidity low. The lid must lock: a uromastyx is strong, determined, and perfectly capable of pushing up a loose top. In a heated Pennsylvania home in winter, indoor air is already dry, which helps, but an enclosure in a damp basement or next to a humidifier is a poor choice.

The layout, as a map

Picture the enclosure from above, with the long side running left to right. It has three zones, and the temperatures below are targets for a mid-size species.

Left end — the basking zone (the hot end). A thick, flat basking rock or slate, raised a few inches off the floor and anchored to the base, sits directly under the heat source and the UVB tube. The basking surface reads **120–135°F** at the top of the rock, depending on species. Warm-side air reads **100–110°F**. The bulb sits behind a protective guard, and the thermostat probe lies on the basking surface itself.

Center — the burrow zone (the retreat). A deep area of packed substrate with a sturdy rock-and-slate tunnel or a large cave hide built into it. The air here is lower, around **90–100°F**, and the lizard can step into the shade, cool down, or sleep. If you dig into the substrate, the temperature inside the burrow is cooler and steadier than the air above it. A tunnel gives the lizard the one thing it needs most to feel safe: a place to disappear.

Right end — the cool end. Cool-end air sits at **80–85°F**. A shallow water dish, a food dish, and a second, smaller hide sit here. This is where the lizard cools off, and it gives you a clear signal about the gradient: a uromastyx that keeps leaving its basking spot for the cool end is overheating, and one that never leaves the basking spot may be too cold at the other end.

Overnight. Turn the lights off. The temperature across the enclosure falls to **70–75°F**. If your room falls below that, add a ceramic heat emitter on its own pulse-proportional thermostat. A ceramic emitter produces heat with no light, so the day-night cycle stays intact.

Zone	Position	Air temperature	Surface temperature	What belongs here
Basking zone	Left end, under the lamp	100–110°F	120–135°F on basking rock	Flat basking rock, heat lamp behind a guard, UVB tube, thermostat probe

Zone	Position	Air temperature	Surface temperature	What belongs here
Burrow zone	Center	90–100°F	85–95°F inside the tunnel	Deep packed substrate, rock-and-slate burrow or cave hide
Cool end	Right end	80–85°F	80–85°F	Shallow water dish, food dish, second hide
Night	Whole enclosure, lights off	70–75°F	70–75°F	No light; ceramic emitter only if the room gets too cold

Building a safe burrow

Uromastyx dig, and a digging animal can bring down anything stacked on loose substrate. The safe sequence is: place rocks and slate on the **floor of the enclosure first**, before adding substrate, so the lizard cannot dig out from under them. Bond stacked pieces together with reptile-safe silicone or a non-toxic epoxy and let it cure fully. Then pack the substrate around the base. Leave generous gaps for the lizard to get in and out and avoid narrow slots where it could become wedged. A burrow that is large enough for the lizard to turn around is better than one that is a tight squeeze.

SECTION 4

Substrate Guide

Substrate is where uromastyx care becomes honest about disagreement. Uromastyx are burrowing animals, and a loose, flat, hard floor is the opposite of what their bodies expect. But the same digging that makes them happy exposes them to **impaction** — the intestinal blockage that happens when swallowed substrate bunches up in the gut and cannot pass. Keepers and exotic vets disagree on how big that risk is. Here is the careful middle of the debate. **Loose, dry sand on its own is risky**, and calcium sand and other "digestible" sands do not solve the problem. A **firmly packed mix of play sand and organic topsoil**, in roughly equal parts or with a little more sand than soil, is widely used by experienced keepers, holds a tunnel shape, and gives the lizard something to dig into. The honest conservative alternative is a **bare floor of tile or slate with plenty of hides and rocks on top** — no impaction risk from the floor, easy cleaning, and less natural behavior. Both approaches can work. Either way, you lower impaction risk with the same habits: correct basking temperatures so digestion runs well, food served in a dish or on a rock, and a vet stool check if droppings change.

Substrate	Best for	Performance	Notes
Packed play sand and organic topsoil (roughly 50:50 to 60:40 sand to soil)	Healthy juveniles and adults who dig	Holds a tunnel when packed and slightly dampened, then dried; keeps humidity low; supports natural digging	Use plain play sand and topsoil with no fertilizer, no perlite, no vermiculite, no moisture crystals. Pack firmly, let it dry fully, and replace soiled sections
Clay-based burrowing mix	Keepers building permanent tunnels	Sets hard and holds burrow shape; low dust	Choose a product made for reptile burrowing with no additives; pack and dry as directed
Ceramic tile or slate with hides and rocks on top	Conservative setups, hatchlings, animals with impaction history	No impaction risk from the floor; easy to clean and disinfect	Less natural behavior; the surface must sit in the warm zone, not only the cold end; add a deep digging box in a corner if you want both
Paper towel or newspaper	Quarantine, new arrivals, sick animals	Zero ingestion risk; easy to read droppings; fully disposable	Not for long-term housing; replace when soiled; useful for learning what normal droppings look like
Reptile carpet or non-loop matting	Short-term use	Easy to clean; no particles	Replace when frayed; fibers can catch claws and be swallowed
Loose play sand alone	Avoid	Poor tunnel structure; impaction risk when swallowed; dust can irritate eyes and nose	Add topsoil and pack it, or use a firm floor instead
Calcium sand and "digestible" sand	Avoid outright	Marketed as safe to eat; clumps in the gut and cases of impaction are well documented	Remove from any setup; not a reliable calcium source

Avoid outright

- **Loose calcium sand** and any sand marketed as "edible" or "digestible"
- **Cedar and pine shavings** — aromatic oils irritate airways and are toxic to reptiles
- **Vermiculite and perlite** — dusty, swallowable, and not meant as a reptile floor

- **Potting soil with fertilizer, moisture beads, or perlite** — additives are harmful if swallowed
- **Crushed walnut shell, corncob, and wood chips** — sharp, swallowable, and prone to mold
- **Gravel and coarse landscaping stone** — hard to dig, easy to swallow
- **Cat litter and clumping litters** — swell inside the gut
- **Colored or dyed desert sand** — dyes and additives are not tested for ingestion
- **Any substrate that stays damp** — mold and respiratory trouble follow

SECTION 5

Heat, UVB & Humidity — The 3 Numbers

If you remember only three things from this guide, remember heat, UVB, and humidity. Uromastyx husbandry is mostly about holding these three numbers where they belong. Get them right and most of the diseases in this guide never appear. Get them wrong and no amount of supplements or fancy food will save the animal.

Low temperature is the single most common cause of appetite loss and poor health in captive uromastyx. A lizard that is too cool cannot digest its food, so it stops eating; its immune system slows down; and its body starts to deteriorate slowly. Keepers often misread "refuses food" as pickiness or brumation when the real problem is a basking surface running 20 degrees too low.

Parameter	Target value	How to measure it	What goes wrong when it's off
Basking surface temperature	120–135°F , depending on species; lower end for hatchlings and smaller species	Infrared temperature gun aimed at the top of the basking rock; thermostat probe on the same surface	Too low: lizard stops eating, digests poorly, gets sick, and may be mistaken for brumating. Too high: thermal burns, heat stress, panting
Warm-side air temperature	100–110°F	Probe thermometer hung at lizard level on the warm side	Too low: sluggish digestion and weak appetite. Too high: dehydration and distress
Cool-end air temperature	80–85°F	Probe thermometer at lizard level on the cool end	Above 90°F: no useful gradient and the lizard cannot cool down. Below 75°F: the lizard cannot recover from heat during the day
Night temperature	70–75°F; avoid dipping below 65°F	Probe thermometer overnight with lights off	Too cold: appetite loss and increased infection risk, particularly respiratory illness
UVB (Ferguson zone 3–4)	UV Index roughly 3–7 at the basking surface	Handheld UV index meter; manufacturer's mounting chart for T5 HO	Too low: metabolic bone disease and poor calcium absorption. Too high (uncommon): eye irritation and stress
Ambient humidity	10–30%	Digital hygrometer at mid-height	Too high: respiratory infections, skin problems, mold in substrate. Very rare to be too dry in a healthy setup

Number one: heat

Uromastyx need far more heat than almost any other pet lizard. A bearded dragon basks around 105–110°F. A uromastyx wants **120–135°F** at the basking surface, with the exact number depending on species. Ornate and Egyptian uromastyx tend to prefer the upper part of the range, while Mali, Moroccan and Saharan animals often do well a little lower. Hatchlings and juveniles start at the lower end of the range and are worked up. If you are uncertain, begin at **120–125°F** and watch the animal: a lizard basking with its body flattened, eyes half closed, and colors bright is comfortable. A lizard that avoids the basking rock, pants with its mouth open, or sits against the cool wall is too hot.

The **surface** temperature of the basking rock and the **air** temperature above it are two different numbers, and an air thermometer alone will mislead you, because the rock absorbs radiant heat and runs much hotter. Measure the surface with an infrared gun every day for the first week, then weekly.

Matching the heat source to the thermostat

Heat source	What it does	Matching thermostat	Notes
Halogen flood bulb or other high-wattage basking bulb	Radiant heat and bright light	Dimming thermostat	The most common basking source; smooth, steady control; use a ceramic socket fixture
Mercury vapour bulb	Heat, strong UVB and light in one bulb	Do not use with a dimming thermostat; control by mounting height and a timer, with an on/off thermostat or a high-limit safety thermostat as a backup	Runs at fixed output; excellent for large enclosures and large lizards; check the maker's instructions
Ceramic heat emitter	Heat only, no light	Pulse-proportional thermostat	For ambient air and nighttime heat; never use on a dimming thermostat
Radiant heat panel	Gentle, broad heat from above	Pulse-proportional thermostat	Good for raising ambient temperature; not strong enough alone for a basking surface
Heat mat or heat rock	Direct contact heat	Do not use as a primary source	Heats from below; uromastyx bask from above; high burn risk with a digging animal

The principle is simple. **Every heater needs a thermostat, and the thermostat type must match the heater.** A dimming thermostat lowers a bulb's brightness and output; it is correct for halogen and incandescent bulbs and wrong for ceramic emitters and mercury vapour bulbs. A pulse-proportional thermostat turns a heater on and off in rapid, proportional pulses and is correct for heat that has no light. An on/off thermostat is the simplest and will work as a backup safety for almost anything. The probe goes at the basking surface, taped or clipped in place, so the thermostat is reading what the lizard feels.

Number two: UVB

UVB is the ultraviolet light that lets a reptile make **vitamin D3** in its skin, which in turn lets it absorb calcium from food. Without it, the bones soften, a condition called **metabolic bone disease**. Uromastyx are sun-baked desert animals, so their requirement is high — the **Ferguson zone 3–4** you met in the Quick Start. The right gear is a **T5 HO linear tube with a reflector** or a **mercury vapour bulb**, mounted at the distance on the manufacturer's chart. Remember a few details:

- **Mesh blocks UV.** A mesh lid or screen between the tube and the lizard cuts a large share of the output. Mount the tube inside the enclosure or account for the loss in the mounting distance.
- **Glass blocks UVB entirely.** A tube shining through a glass lid does nothing.
- **Output fades before the light does.** A tube looks bright long after it has stopped producing enough UVB. Replace it on the manufacturer's schedule, which for T5 HO tubes is typically about every 12 months, and write the install date on the fixture. Some keepers replace sooner, and a handheld UV index meter is the only way to be sure.
- **The tube should span the basking zone** and cover part of the gradient, so the lizard can choose how much UV it gets.
- **Photoperiod:** 12 to 14 hours of light in summer, 10 to 12 in winter, on a timer.

Number three: humidity

Uromastyx want **10–30% humidity**. The desert air is dry, and their bodies are built to extract moisture from food. This is the biggest mental shift for keepers used to tropical species. Do not mist the enclosure. Do not add a fogger. Do not place a large water bowl directly under the heat lamp. Water on the cool end, in a small shallow dish, is plenty. Humidity above about 40% is where respiratory infections, skin infections, and mold in the substrate start to appear. If your home is humid in summer, a dehumidifier in the room helps; if the enclosure reads high, increase ventilation and check for leaks, damp substrate, or an oversized water dish.

An occasional shallow soak in lukewarm water (about 85–90°F, shallow enough to reach the belly and no further) for 10 to 15 minutes, fully supervised, is useful for constipation, shedding trouble, or a lizard that looks dehydrated. After a soak, dry the lizard and return it to the basking spot to warm up. Soaking is a tool for specific jobs, not a weekly routine for every animal.

SECTION 6

Diet & Nutrition



A herbivore's menu: bitter greens and edible flowers as the daily base, with a small dry mix of lentils, millet and split peas. No fruit, no insects for adults.

Uromastyx are **herbivores**, and their diet is the opposite of what most people expect from a lizard. The wild menu is leaves, flowers and seeds, eaten steadily through the day, and the captive menu should look the same: a fresh pile of dark leafy greens and edible flowers every morning, plus a small scoop of a dry seed mix. **Adult uromastyx do not need insects.** Hatchlings of some species may take a few, and you can offer a small number of tiny insects to a young animal if you wish, but it is optional and not required. Once they are past the first months, the plant diet is complete on its own.

The reason to hold the line is the same as for any strict plant-eater. Animal protein pushes the kidneys hard and, over months and years, contributes to kidney disease and gout. A uromastyx that eagerly gobbles a cricket is not telling you the food is good for it. It is telling you it is curious. You are in charge of the diet because the lizard cannot be.

Staples

Food	Category	Frequency	Notes
Dandelion greens and flowers	Staple	Several times a week or daily	Calcium-rich, low in oxalates, and loved by nearly every uromastyx. Pick only from untreated ground, never roadsides or chemically treated lawns
Collard greens	Staple	Several times a week	High calcium and a solid base for the salad
Mustard greens	Staple	Several times a week	Good calcium balance; peppery flavor most lizards accept
Endive and escarole	Staple	Several times a week	Mild, easy to find, good variety in the rotation
Red leaf lettuce	Staple	A few times a week	Softer and less dense than other greens; useful as filler, not as the whole meal
Hibiscus flowers and leaves	Staple	A few times a week	A favorite treat that is also nutritious; use only plants you know are pesticide-free
Dry seed mix (lentils, millet, split peas, barley)	Staple	Most days, in a small scoop	See the seed mix below

Occasional and limited foods

Food	Category	Frequency	Notes
Turnip greens, bok choy, arugula	Occasional	Once or twice a week	Fine in rotation; goitrogens in cruciferous greens can affect the thyroid if they dominate the salad
Kale, broccoli leaves	Limit	Occasionally	Same thyroid concern; a small part of a varied mix only
Prickly pear pad (spines removed) and flowers	Occasional	Occasionally	A desert plant they eat in the wild; a hydrating treat
Squash, shredded	Occasional	Occasionally	A small amount adds variety; not a staple
Spinach, Swiss chard, beet greens	Limit strictly	Rarely, if ever	High oxalates bind calcium and undermine the whole supplement plan
Fruit	Not a regular item	A tiny piece now and then at most	High sugar and unnecessary; a lizard that learns to wait for fruit will refuse its greens

Never feed

Food	Why
Insects as a routine item for adults	Not needed; adds protein to a plant-eating gut
Meat, eggs, or any animal protein	Kidney strain and gout over time
Dairy products	Reptiles cannot digest lactose
Dog food, cat food, and any pet-food kibble	High in animal protein and not made for reptiles
Iceberg lettuce	Almost all water, almost no nutrition
Spinach in quantity	Oxalates bind calcium

Food	Why
Avocado	Toxic to many animals
Onion, garlic, leeks	Harmful to reptiles
Rhubarb	High in oxalic acid and toxic
Anything treated with pesticide or herbicide	Wash everything and never use sprayed or roadside plants
Bread, pasta, cereal, and processed human food	Not a natural diet and a source of additives

The seed mix

In the wild, seeds are a major part of what uromastyx eat, and a dry seed mix is the backbone of a captive diet alongside the greens. A good mix is equal parts of **lentils, millet, split peas, and barley**, all plain, dry, and uncooked, with no added salt, flavoring, or seasoning. Offer it dry in a shallow dish, in a small scoop sized to the lizard, and a mid-size adult takes roughly one to two tablespoons a day. As a rule of thumb, the seeds should be about a quarter of what you offer by volume, with the greens and flowers making up the rest. Watch body condition. A lizard with a fat, round tail base and heavy hips is getting too many seeds; a thin lizard with sunken sides needs more food.

Scatter some of the seeds across a flat stone instead of pouring them in a bowl; a lizard that hunts for seeds uses its natural foraging instincts.

Supplement schedule

Supplement	Schedule	Notes
Plain calcium powder without D3	Dust the greens three to four times a week; daily for hatchlings and juveniles	The main supplement; with correct UVB the lizard makes its own D3, so calcium alone is enough most of the time
Reptile multivitamin	Once every two weeks	Covers trace nutrients the rotation may miss
Calcium with D3	Only if a vet recommends it	D3 builds up in the body; extra D3 on top of strong UVB can overdose the animal

Keepers and vets differ slightly on the exact frequencies, so treat this as a safe, widely used starting point and let your exotic vet adjust it for your animal's age, bloodwork, and lighting.

Feeding schedule

Feed **once a day, in the morning**, after the lizard has been basking for 30 to 60 minutes and is properly warm. Wash the greens, tear them into pieces the size of the lizard's head, dust with calcium as scheduled, and place the pile on the warm side or the center of the enclosure. Remove uneaten fresh greens at the end of the day so they do not spoil. The dry seeds can stay in the dish until the next feeding. Rotate at least three different greens and flowers across the week; variety protects against deficiencies and keeps picky eaters interested.

Hydration

Uromastyx get most of their moisture from their food. Fresh, slightly damp greens carry plenty of water, and many keepers simply rinse the salad and shake it off without drying it completely. A small, shallow water dish on the cool end gives the lizard the choice. Some drink from it, many barely touch it, and either is normal. Do not put the dish under the lamp or make it large, because standing water in a heated enclosure raises humidity. A healthy uromastyx produces a firm dropping with a white or cream urate (the chalky waste that comes out with it). Hard, gritty, or yellow urates, sunken eyes, or wrinkled skin suggest dehydration, which a short lukewarm soak and a temperature check can start to address.

Shop the food and supplies: Browse Reptile & Amphibian Food and Live Feed Delivered!.

SECTION 7

Shedding & Brumation

How uromastyx shed

Uromastyx shed in **flakes and patches**, not in one piece like a snake. A lizard about to shed turns dull and pale, and the old skin lifts in dry, papery sheets, often starting on the head and back and finishing on the limbs, feet, and tail. Hatchlings and juveniles shed often while growing; adults shed a few times a year. Because the air in the enclosure is dry, you will see more flaking than in a tropical lizard, and that is normal.

The places to check are the **toes**, the **tail tip**, and the **eyelids and around the eyes**. Retained shed that builds up on a toe can constrict circulation and cost the toe. Check every toe after each shed. If you find stuck shed, a shallow, lukewarm soak for 10 to 15 minutes loosens it, and a soft, damp cotton swab can lift loosened flakes gently. **Never peel dry shed**, and never pull at the spiny tail scales. If a toe looks swollen or dark, call your vet.

What brumation looks like

As the days shorten, a uromastyx may slow down. It eats less, basks for a shorter time, sleeps more, and may stay in the burrow for days or weeks. This is **brumation**, a natural seasonal slowdown, and many uromastyx show some version of it in fall and winter even in a heated home. Appetite often tapers off and returns in spring.

The challenge for new keepers is telling normal brumation from illness. The two can look the same on the surface, so use this comparison.

What you see	Likely normal brumation	Likely sick
Eating	Slowly tapers over weeks; may fast for a while	Stops suddenly, or refuses food while still active and basking
Weight and body	Stable; tail stays full	Visibly thinner, sunken sides, shrinking tail base
Eyes	Bright, clear, may be closed while resting	Sunken, cloudy, crusty, or weeping
Response	Wakes and moves normally when disturbed	Weak, floppy, or slow to respond
Breathing	Quiet and unlabored	Wheezing, bubbles, open-mouth breathing
Timing	Fall and winter, with shorter days	Any time of year, including summer
Temperatures	Correct, with the lizard simply choosing to rest	Low or unstable; check them first

Rule one: check your temperatures before you decide it is brumation. A lizard that stops eating while the basking surface is running 100°F is not brumating; it is cold. **Rule two:** young animals under about a year, underweight animals, newly imported animals, and any animal that has been ill should not be encouraged to brumate. The safe approach for most keepers is to keep the lights and temperatures steady all winter and accept that the lizard may eat less. If you want to give a healthy adult a deliberate cooler winter rest, talk to an exotic vet first, because the right protocol depends on species, age, and condition. Keep fresh water available throughout, keep an eye on weight, and call your vet if the lizard loses visible body condition or fasts for more than a few weeks.

SECTION 8

Common Challenges & Solutions

Uromastyx hide illness well, and a lizard that is truly sick often looks only a little off. Almost every problem below traces back to the same short list: temperature too low, UVB too weak or too old, air too damp, or diet off. When something looks wrong, check the numbers first.

Not eating (low temperatures)

What you see: a lizard that ignores its salad, sits in the burrow, stays dark and dull, and may look sluggish. **Why:** the most common cause by far is a basking surface that is too cool. A cold lizard cannot digest, so it does not eat. Other causes are a recent move, brumation, parasites, or illness. **What to do:** measure the basking surface with an infrared gun before anything else, then check warm-side air, cool end, and night temperature, and fix whatever is low. Confirm the lamps and UVB are working. Offer a favorite food such as dandelion flowers. **When to call a vet:** if the lizard still refuses food after a week with corrected temperatures, or sooner if it is losing weight, has sunken eyes, or looks weak.

Metabolic bone disease (MBD)

What you see: a soft or rubbery jaw, trembling or twitching legs, bowed limbs, swollen legs, difficulty walking, a lizard that drags its hind end, or a hatchling that is small for its age. **Why:** weak, old, or blocked UVB, combined with a calcium shortfall. Mesh, glass, or a tube mounted too far away all cut the dose. **What to do:** replace the tube if it is past its schedule, fix the mounting distance, remove mesh or glass between tube and lizard, and review the calcium plan with your vet. **When to call a vet:** as soon as you see any softness or tremor. Early cases respond well to treatment; advanced cases leave permanent deformity.

Impaction

What you see: no droppings for several days, a swollen belly, straining, loss of appetite, weakness or dragging of the back legs, or regurgitation. **Why:** swallowed substrate or other material blocking the gut, made worse by cold temperatures, dehydration, and loose sand. **What to do:** check temperatures, offer a lukewarm soak, and switch to a firm floor while you wait. Do not force oil, fluids, or enemas at home. **When to call a vet:** the same day if the belly is swollen or the back legs are weak. A vet can take X-rays and treat safely.

Parasites in imports

What you see: weight loss despite eating, a thin tail base, loose or foul stool, visible worms, or a dull, flat lizard. **Why:** wild-caught animals commonly carry intestinal parasites such as pinworms. A light pinworm load is common and not always treated, but heavy loads or other parasites cause real harm. **What to do:** collect a fresh dropping in a sealed container and bring it to an exotic vet for a fecal exam. Do not give over-the-counter dewormers. **When to call a vet:** book a check within two weeks of bringing home any wild-caught animal, and sooner for weight loss or loose stool.

Respiratory infection

What you see: wheezing, clicking, bubbles or stringy mucus at the nose or mouth, open-mouth breathing, lethargy, and a lizard that stretches its neck upward to breathe. **Why:** damp air, cold temperatures, poor ventilation, dusty substrate, or stress. Remember the salt sneeze: dry white flecks or tiny clear puffs from the nostrils are normal; wet, bubbly, or stringy discharge is not. **What to do:** bring temperatures up to the correct range, lower humidity, improve ventilation, and clean the enclosure. **When to call a vet:** the same day for open-mouth breathing or bubbling, and within a day or two for any persistent discharge.

Thermal burns

What you see: blistered, darkened, raised, or peeling scales, often along the back or on the belly. **Why:** a bulb mounted too close, no bulb guard, a thermostat probe in the wrong place, a heat rock, or a heat mat without control. Uromastyx will bask right up

against a hot lamp. **What to do:** correct the heat setup immediately, add a guard, keep the lizard on clean paper towel, and keep the wound dry. Do not apply creams without a vet's advice. **When to call a vet:** within a day for any blistering, and the same day for open or weeping tissue.

Kidney disease and gout

What you see: less appetite, lethargy, increased drinking or urinating, sunken eyes, swollen joints at the knees, elbows, or toes, and hard, gritty urates. **Why:** chronic dehydration, too much animal protein, or an overly rich diet, building up uric acid that crystallizes in the joints and organs (gout). **What to do:** remove all animal protein, review the diet, check temperatures and humidity, and encourage water intake with fresh, damp greens. **When to call a vet:** within a few days of any joint swelling or persistent loss of appetite, because bloodwork is needed and gout is painful.

Stuck shed

What you see: old skin clinging to toes, around the eyes, or at the tail tip, often in a ring. **Why:** usually dehydration, a shed interrupted by cold, no rough surfaces to rub on, or a nutritional problem. **What to do:** a shallow, lukewarm soak for 10 to 15 minutes, followed by gentle rubbing with a soft, damp cotton swab. Never pull dry shed. **When to call a vet:** any toe or the tail tip that looks swollen, dark, or tight.

Egg binding (dystocia)

What you see: a female with a swollen belly who is digging constantly, straining, restless, then lethargic, and off her food. **Why:** females can develop eggs even without a male, and they cannot pass them if there is no suitable place to lay, if calcium is low, or if an egg is malformed. **What to do:** offer a laying box of damp sand and topsoil at least 8 to 12 inches deep on the warm side, keep the enclosure quiet, and give a warm soak. **When to call a vet:** the same day if she has strained for 24 hours or looks weak. Egg binding is life-threatening.

Mouth rot (infectious stomatitis)

What you see: swollen, red, or bleeding gums, thick yellow or cheesy material in the mouth, drooling, and reluctance to eat. **Why:** a bacterial infection that follows an injury, low temperatures, or chronic stress, including nose-rubbing against glass. **What to do:** check and correct temperatures and remove anything abrasive. Do not scrape the mouth yourself. **When to call a vet:** within a day or two. Treatment normally needs prescribed antibiotics, and delay lets the infection spread to the jaw bone.

Constipation

What you see: no droppings for several days, a lizard that strains, a slightly swollen belly, and sluggishness. **Why:** dehydration, low temperatures, too few fresh greens, or early impaction. **What to do:** a lukewarm soak, correct temperatures, and more fresh, damp greens. Do not give oils or laxatives without veterinary advice. **When to call a vet:** if there is still no stool after five to seven days, or if the belly is bloated or the lizard seems weak.

Quick reference

What you see	Likely cause	First step	Vet urgency
Refuses food, dark and dull	Temperatures too low	Measure basking surface and fix	A week if no change
Soft jaw, tremors, bowed legs	Metabolic bone disease	Replace UVB, fix mounting	Within days
Swollen belly, no stool	Impaction	Check heat, lukewarm soak	Same day
Weight loss, loose stool	Parasites	Fecal exam	Within two weeks
Wheezing, bubbles at nose	Respiratory infection	Raise heat, lower humidity	Same day

What you see	Likely cause	First step	Vet urgency
Blistered scales	Thermal burn	Fix heat setup, guard bulb	Within a day
Swollen joints, lethargy	Kidney disease or gout	Remove protein, review diet	Within days
Stuck skin on toes or tail	Stuck shed	Lukewarm soak	If tight or dark
Female straining, restless	Egg binding	Lay box, quiet	Same day
Swollen gums, cheesy mouth	Mouth rot	Fix temperatures	Within a day or two
No stool for days	Constipation	Soak, damp greens	After five to seven days

SECTION 9

Handling

Start slowly

A new uromastyx needs time. Leave it alone for the first three to five days, then begin short, calm sessions. Approach from the side and at eye level, never from above, because a hand descending from overhead looks like a bird of prey. Let the lizard see and smell your hand, then slide it gently under the body. Sessions of five minutes, once a day or every other day, build trust better than long, stressful sessions. Hold your lizard when it is warm and alert, not when it is cold and groggy, and not right after eating.

Support the whole body, never the tail

Lift with one hand under the chest and front legs and the other under the hips and the base of the tail. Keep the lizard close to your body so it feels secure. **Never grab or pull a uromastyx by its spiny tail.** The tail is its main defense, but it is not built to drop and regrow the way a gecko's can, and an injured tail can be permanently damaged. **Never pull a lizard out of its burrow by the tail** or force it from a tunnel. If it is wedged in, wait for it to come out on its own or gently coax it with a warm soak and patience.

Reading the signals

Signal	What it means
Puffed-up body	Fear or defense; the lizard is making itself look bigger. Give it space
Hissing or open mouth	Warning; back off and try again later
Backing into the burrow with the tail facing out	Defensive; the spiked tail is the plug. Do not reach in
Tail swinging or lashing	A strike is possible; step back
Calm, flat body, slow blinking	Relaxed and comfortable
Tongue flicking	Normal exploration
Salt flecks at the nose	Normal; this is not a cold

Children and families

Uromastyx and children can do well together with supervision. Teach children to sit on the floor, support the whole body with two hands, and stay still. Handling should end at the first sign of puffing or hissing. Nobody should hold the lizard near their face. Everyone washes their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds afterward, because uromastyx can carry Salmonella.

SECTION 10

Routine Care Calendar

How often	What to do
Daily	Offer a fresh pile of washed greens and flowers with calcium as scheduled, plus a small scoop of the dry seed mix
Daily	Remove uneaten fresh greens and spot-clean droppings
Daily	Confirm the lights came on and off on schedule and check the basking surface with a temperature gun
Daily	Refill the shallow water dish and look the lizard over for alertness, eyes, and posture
Weekly	Scrub and refill the food and water dishes
Weekly	Check toes, tail tip, and eyelids for retained shed
Weekly	Check that rocks, the burrow, and the lid latch are secure
Weekly	Weigh the lizard or check body condition at the tail base and hips
Every two weeks	Dust the greens with the multivitamin once
Monthly	Replace any soiled substrate and rinse rocks and slate
Monthly	Run a full check of bulbs, guards, cords, and thermostat probes
Every 12 months, or on the maker's schedule	Replace the UVB tube or bulb, and mark the date on the fixture
Annually	Exotic vet wellness visit with a fecal exam; bloodwork is useful as the lizard ages

SECTION 11

When to See a Vet

Uromastyx are stoic. By the time a symptom is easy to see, the problem has usually been building for weeks. **When you are unsure, call.** A five-minute phone call to an exotic vet is always better than a week of waiting.

Go today:

- Open-mouth breathing, wheezing, bubbles at the nose or mouth, or labored breathing
- Straining or a swollen belly with no stool, or any tissue protruding from the vent
- A female who has strained to lay eggs for 24 hours or looks weak
- A burn with open, weeping, or dying tissue
- A fracture, deep wound, or bleeding that will not stop
- Seizures, circling, loss of coordination, or unresponsiveness
- A jaw that is visibly deformed, swollen, or cannot close
- Sudden collapse or a lizard that cannot lift its body off the floor

Book within a few days:

- A soft jaw, tremors, or bowed limbs
- Swollen joints
- Refusing food for more than a week despite correct temperatures
- Visible weight loss or a thinning tail base
- Loose or foul stool lasting more than a few days, or visible worms
- Cheesy material, swelling, or bleeding in the mouth
- Cloudy, sunken, or crusted eyes
- Any lump or mass
- Retained shed on toes or the tail tip that does not loosen with a soak

Bring a written temperature log, your supplement schedule, and a fresh stool sample in a sealed container.

SECTION 12

FAQ

What do uromastyx eat?

Uromastyx are herbivores that eat mostly greens, flowers, and seeds. A daily base of dandelion greens and flowers, collards, mustard greens, endive, escarole, red leaf lettuce, and hibiscus flowers or leaves, plus a small scoop of a dry mix of lentils, millet, split peas, and barley, covers nearly everything they need. Dust the greens with plain calcium powder several times a week and offer a multivitamin about every two weeks. Avoid fruit as a regular item, animal protein, dairy, spinach in quantity, iceberg lettuce, avocado, onion, garlic, and dog or cat food.

How big do uromastyx get?

It depends on the species. Saharan (Geyri) uromastyx are the smallest at roughly 8 to 12 inches. Ornate, Mali, and Moroccan uromastyx, the most common pets, reach about 12 to 16 inches. The Egyptian uromastyx is the largest and can reach 30 inches or more. Hatchlings take a couple of years to reach full size, so confirm your species before you buy equipment and plan for the adult.

How long do uromastyx live?

With good care, uromastyx live 15 to 25 years in captivity, which makes them one of the longer-lived pet lizards. Reaching the upper end depends on correct heat, strong UVB, dry air, a plant-based diet, and a healthy start, and captive-bred animals generally do better than wild-caught imports.

What temperature does a uromastyx need?

Uromastyx need far more heat than most pet lizards. The basking surface should be 120 to 135°F, depending on species, the warm side of the enclosure 100 to 110°F, the cool end 80 to 85°F, and night 70 to 75°F. Measure the basking surface with an infrared temperature gun and control every heater with a matched thermostat. Low temperature is the most common cause of appetite loss and poor health, so when something seems off, check the heat first.

Do uromastyx need UVB?

Yes, strongly. Uromastyx are desert sun-lovers in Ferguson zone 3 to 4, which means they need high-output UVB to make vitamin D3 and absorb calcium. A T5 HO tube with a reflector or a mercury vapour bulb, mounted at the distance on the manufacturer's chart and replaced on schedule, is the right choice. Mesh and glass block UVB, so mount the light accordingly. Without it, metabolic bone disease is a serious risk.

What humidity do uromastyx need?

Very little. Keep the humidity between 10 and 30 percent and check it with a digital hygrometer. Uromastyx get most of their moisture from their food, so there is no need to mist the enclosure, and damp conditions cause respiratory infections and skin problems. A small, shallow water dish on the cool end is enough, and an occasional lukewarm soak can help with shedding or constipation.

Do uromastyx eat insects?

Adult uromastyx do not need insects and do best on a plant-only diet. Hatchlings of some species may take a few small insects, and offering them is optional, but once the lizard is growing steadily on greens and seeds there is no reason to continue. Animal protein over the long term strains the kidneys and can lead to gout, so the safest approach is to keep the diet completely plant-based as the lizard matures.

How big a tank does a uromastyx need?

For the mid-size species (Ornate, Mali, Moroccan), the minimum is 4 feet long by 2 feet deep by 2 feet tall, and larger is better. Floor space matters more than height. Egyptian uromastyx need a considerably bigger enclosure, around 6 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet at a minimum. The enclosure needs a secure, ventilated lid, a thermal gradient, and enough substrate depth or hides to let the lizard burrow.

Are uromastyx good pets for beginners?

They can be, for a keeper willing to learn their unusual needs. Uromastyx are calm, rarely bite, and eat a simple diet, which makes them more forgiving than many lizards once the setup is correct. The difficulty is the setup: extreme heat, strong UVB, very dry air, and a burrowing habitat that most beginners do not expect. A beginner who builds the enclosure first, chooses a captive-bred animal, and finds an exotic vet will do well. Avoid the Saharan and Egyptian species as first lizards.

Can two uromastyx live together?

No. Uromastyx are solitary, and males in particular fight, sometimes seriously. Even pairs or females housed together often develop a dominant animal that crowds the subordinate away from the best basking spots and the food. One uromastyx per enclosure is the safe standard.

Ready to shop? Start with *Reptiles & Amphibians*. 10% of every purchase supports no-kill animal shelters.
Not sure this is the right pet? Compare your options in our *Reptile Guide*.

SECTION 13

Every Purchase Gives Back

Before we earn a dime, **10% of every purchase at Walnut Creek Supply goes to no-kill animal shelters across the country.** It is not an add-on at checkout or an option you have to remember. It comes off the top of every order, every day, because responsible pet ownership and community care are the same commitment pointed in two directions.

Reptiles end up in rescue, too, and the cause is usually a setup that was never quite right or a lizard bought on impulse. If you have read this far, you are the sort of keeper uromastyx deserve: someone who confirmed the species, built the enclosure first, measured the heat, and planned for a decades-long friendship. And if you are in a position to adopt rather than buy, reptile rescues often have beautiful adult uromastyx waiting for a patient home.

We are a family business in Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. We grow our own food, keep our own animals, and stock the clean-label, USA-made goods we would put in front of our own pets — **no mystery ingredients, Clean Fuel, No Junk**, and no care guide that skips the hard parts. If you have a question about your uromastyx's heat setup, its UVB, its diet, or where to find a good exotic vet, call us at **(717) 983-8069**. We would rather talk it through with you.

Welcome to 15 to 25 years with one of the most remarkable lizards in the hobby.

From our family to yours, Walnut Creek Supply — Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania walnutcreeksupply.com