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Collard Lizard Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus collaris*)** is a colorful, fast-moving lizard native to the arid and rocky habitats of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. It gets its name from the two distinctive black bands around its neck, resembling a collar. Known for their bold personalities, upright stance, and incredible sprinting ability—including short bipedal runs—collared lizards are captivating to observe.

Adults typically reach **10–14 inches in total length**, with males being more vividly colored than females. They require high heat, strong lighting, and space to climb and explore. These lizards can be moderately challenging to keep due to their activity level and environmental needs, but they thrive with attentive, well-informed care.

## **Housing & Environment**

Collared lizards are **diurnal, active lizards** that require **spacious and vertically enriched enclosures**.

### **Enclosure Setup**

* **Minimum size:** 36"x18"x18" enclosure for a single adult; larger preferred
* Use secure, well-ventilated terrariums with locking lids
* Include rocks, driftwood, branches, and climbing structures to mimic a rocky desert
* Multiple hides (warm and cool side)
* Open floor space for running and basking

### **Substrate Options**

* Reptile carpet or paper towel (easiest to clean)
* Clay/sand soil blends for natural digging (only if dry and properly packed)
* Avoid loose, dry sand for juveniles (impaction risk)

Clean spot waste daily; deep-clean the entire enclosure monthly or as needed.

## **Heating, Lighting & Humidity**

Collared lizards require intense lighting and a wide temperature gradient to stay healthy and active.

### **Temperature Gradient**

* **Basking spot:** 100–110°F
* **Ambient daytime:** 80–90°F
* **Cool side:** 75–80°F
* **Nighttime:** 65–75°F

Use a **basking bulb** mounted above a rock or branch to allow natural thermoregulation.

### **UVB Lighting**

* Essential for calcium metabolism and overall health
* Use a high-output UVB bulb (10–12%) mounted within 12–18 inches of the basking area
* Provide 12–14 hours of UVB and visible light daily
* Replace UVB bulbs every 6–12 months based on manufacturer guidelines

### **Humidity**

* Ideal range: **30–50%**
* Low ambient humidity mimics natural desert environment
* Provide a small humid hide or occasional misting to assist with shedding

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Collared lizards are **insectivores**, requiring a varied and well-supplemented diet of live prey.

### **Feeding Guidelines**

* Feed juveniles daily; adults every other day
* Insects should be gut-loaded and dusted with supplements

### **Suitable Prey**

* Crickets, dubia roaches, black soldier fly larvae
* Mealworms and superworms (occasionally)
* Silkworms, hornworms, grasshoppers
* Avoid wild-caught insects or prey that’s too large

### **Supplements**

* Calcium with D3: 3–4 times per week
* Multivitamin: once weekly

Provide water in a shallow dish or mist foliage lightly—some lizards will drink from droplets.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Collared lizards are fast, alert, and can be defensive if startled. While they may tolerate short, gentle handling sessions, they are primarily display animals.

* Always supervise handling—collared lizards can sprint and leap quickly
* Support the body with both hands, never grab by the tail
* Handling sessions should be brief and calm, especially with new or juvenile animals
* With patience, some individuals become more tolerant over time

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Collared lizards benefit from **routine veterinary exams**, ideally within a few weeks of acquisition and then annually.

### **Common Health Issues**

* Metabolic bone disease from low calcium or UVB
* Respiratory infections from poor ventilation or low temps
* Skin infections or poor shedding from low humidity or unclean habitat
* Impaction from inappropriate substrate or prey
* Parasites, especially in wild-caught individuals

### **Warning Signs**

* Lethargy, decreased appetite
* Labored breathing, wheezing
* Swollen joints or limbs
* Irregular or infrequent shedding
* Discharge from eyes or nostrils

Seek veterinary care promptly for any of the above signs.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

These active lizards need **physical and visual stimulation** to thrive.

### **Enrichment Ideas**

* Rearranged climbing structures
* Varying rock textures and basking spots
* Temporary “feeding puzzles” with scattered prey
* Visual barriers or backgrounds to reduce stress
* Safe, supervised exploration time outside the enclosure

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Collared lizards can **run short distances on two legs** when startled or chasing prey
* Males display **bright blue, green, and yellow** colors when mature
* They are **territorial and should not be housed in pairs** unless breeding is planned
* In the wild, they bask on rocks and eat insects, spiders, and smaller lizards
* With proper care, they can live **6–10+ years** in captivity

## **Supplies Checklist**

* 36"+ glass or PVC enclosure with secure lid
* Basking bulb (100–110°F)
* High-output UVB fixture and bulb
* Digital thermometer and hygrometer
* Rocks, logs, branches for climbing
* Multiple hides (cool and warm side)
* Gut-loaded feeder insects
* Calcium and multivitamin powders
* Water dish or misting system
* Cleaning supplies (reptile-safe)
* Secure carrier for vet visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*