**YVCipedia REPTILE**

Uromastyx Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

**Uromastyx**, or **spiny-tailed lizards**, are robust, desert-adapted reptiles found across North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of South Asia. They’re named for their distinctive **heavy, spiny tail**, used for defense.

Uromastyx are primarily **herbivorous** and diurnal baskers. Their personalities range from shy to curious and even tame with regular, gentle interaction (though they are **not “cuddly”** reptiles).

Depending on species, adults typically reach **10–30+ inches** (e.g., Moroccan or Mali ~12–18", Egyptian up to 30") and can live **15–20+ years** with excellent care.

## **Housing & Environment**

Uromastyx are **terrestrial desert lizards** that require large enclosures with ample floor space, strong heat gradients, and bright light.

**Enclosure size recommendations:**

* Minimum **4×2×2 ft** (approx. 75–120 gallons) for small/medium species
* **6×3×3 ft or larger** for Egyptian and other large species

A **front-opening enclosure** with secure doors is preferred for easy access and observation.

**Interior setup should include:**

* Deep substrate (4–6" minimum) for digging and burrowing
* Rock ledges and flat basking surfaces
* Multiple secure hides (warm and cool ends)
* Branches or logs for climbing (optional but enriching)

**Recommended substrates:**

* Washed play sand
* Excavator clay or sandy soil mixes
* Avoid calci-sand or fine dust that can cause respiratory issues

Spot-clean waste daily and conduct full substrate changes every 4–8 weeks or as needed.

## **Heating, Lighting & Humidity**

Uromastyx need **intense basking heat** and **full-spectrum UVB** to mimic their natural desert environment.

**Temperature gradient:**

* **Basking spot surface:** 110–130°F (some keepers provide even higher for Egyptian species)
* **Warm side ambient:** 90–100°F
* **Cool side ambient:** 75–85°F
* **Nighttime:** Can drop safely to 65–75°F

**Heating:**

* Overhead halogen floodlights for strong, top-down basking
* Ceramic heat emitters or radiant panels for supplemental heat
* Avoid heat rocks (burn risk)

**UVB lighting:**

* Essential to prevent metabolic bone disease
* High-output **T5 HO 10–14% UVB tubes** recommended
* Replace bulbs every 6–12 months
* Provide 12–14 hours of daylight per day

**Humidity:**

* Extremely low—maintain **10–30%**
* Enclosure should stay **dry and well-ventilated**
* Never mist or add standing water sources (can cause respiratory infections)

## **Water & Hydration**

Uromastyx are **desert specialists** adapted to arid environments and **rarely drink standing water**.

* Fresh greens supply most hydration needs.
* You may offer a shallow water dish for some species, but many will ignore it.
* Ensure enclosure stays dry to prevent respiratory illness and mold growth.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Uromastyx are **primarily herbivores**, requiring a varied, high-fiber, low-protein plant-based diet.

**Staple greens:**

* Collard, mustard, turnip greens
* Dandelion greens
* Endive, escarole

**Other veggies:**

* Squash (butternut, acorn)
* Bell peppers
* Carrots (grated)

**Occasional treats (sparingly):**

* Legumes (peas, green beans)
* Edible flowers (hibiscus, nasturtium)
* Fruits (very limited—e.g., berries, melon)

**Avoid:**

* Animal proteins (meat, insects)
* High-oxalate greens (spinach, chard in excess)
* Citrus fruits

**Supplements:**

* Calcium with D3: **2–3× weekly**
* Multivitamin: **1× weekly**

**Feeding schedule:**

* Adults: Feed **daily or every other day**, offering fresh greens daily
* Juveniles: Daily feedings to support growth

Remove uneaten food at the end of the day to maintain cleanliness.

## **Behavior & Handling**

Uromastyx can become **calm and tolerant** with gentle, consistent interaction.

**Handling guidelines:**

* Support the entire body securely
* Avoid grabbing from above, which can stress them
* Start with short, calm sessions to build trust
* Monitor body language—gaping, tail whipping, or hiding indicate stress

While not “cuddly,” many become confident enough to rest calmly on an arm or lap.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Schedule an **initial veterinary exam** after acquisition and plan for **annual wellness checkups** with a reptile-savvy vet.

**Common health issues:**

* Metabolic bone disease (from inadequate UVB or calcium)
* Obesity (from excessive or inappropriate foods)
* Dehydration (from lack of fresh greens)
* Respiratory infections (if humidity is too high)
* Parasites (especially in wild-caught specimens)

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or weakness
* Swollen limbs or jaw
* Loss of appetite or weight loss
* Wheezing or mouth breathing
* Retained or abnormal sheds

Prompt veterinary care is essential to address problems early.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Uromastyx thrive in **enclosures that mimic rocky desert environments**.

**Enrichment ideas:**

* Rock piles and ledges for climbing and basking
* Multiple hides for security and temperature choice
* Deep substrate for digging and burrowing
* Rotating décor to encourage exploration
* Natural light cycles on timers

Creating a dynamic, well-structured habitat promotes both **physical and mental well-being**.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Uromastyx **store fat in their tails**, which can indicate overall health.
* Their **spiny tails** serve as a defense against predators.
* In the wild, they bask in **intense desert sun**—replicating this is vital in captivity.
* Despite desert origins, they need **fresh greens daily** for hydration.
* With proper care, some species can live **20+ years** in captivity.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Large, secure enclosure (≥4×2×2 ft minimum)
* Overhead basking lamps with thermostat/dimmer
* T5 HO UVB lighting and appropriate fixture
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Deep, diggable substrate (sand/soil mix)
* Rock piles, flat basking surfaces, hides
* Daily fresh greens and chopped veggies
* Calcium with D3 and multivitamin powders
* Feeding tongs and cleaning tools
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*