

No. 39



## Spiny Lizards

*Scleropus* spp. and others

An  
Introductory  
Information Leaflet

from



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Reptile Product Company

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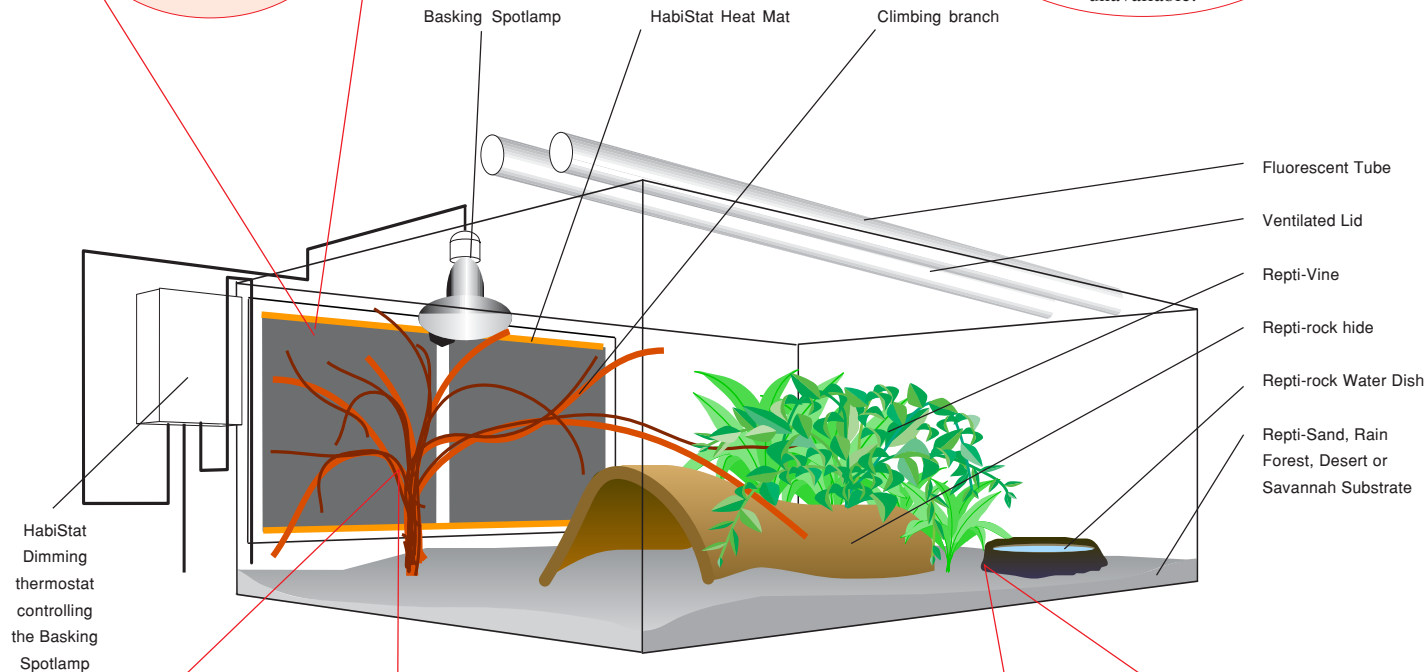
### Background Heat

Use a heat mat between half and two thirds the size of the cage to provide background heating. The hottest spot in the cage should not be above 40°C while the coolest should not be below 28°C. Use a HabiStat Mat - Stat if the temperature is too hot but put the whole cage in a cooler place if the temperature is not cool enough.

**Food:** Crickets, Locusts, Mealworms, and as a special treat Waxworms. Supplement livefoods by dusting insects with *Repton* or feeding *Cricket Diet Plus & Mealworm Diet Plus*. Tame individuals may also accept a commercially prepared, fresh meat reptile diet and thawed rodent pups. Water should be fresh and changed every day. These lizards may also eat an amount of fresh sweet fruit and leafy salads.

### Cleanliness and Hygiene:

A routine cleaner for all non-porous surfaces could be *Vetaclene*. Anything that cannot be easily cleaned should be thrown away and replaced. Any little graze or blemish on the animals themselves would benefit from the first aid afforded by dabbing the wound with *Vetadine*. As far as human hygiene is concerned, *Vetasept Surgical Scrub* will clean hands and surfaces while *Vetasept Hand Rub* will allow adequate cleansing and disinfection even in cases when water is unavailable.



A Cage Suitable for Spiny Lizards

### Hot Spot

A local area of higher temperature can be created with a *Basking Spotlamp* or a ceramic heater. Use the former in conjunction with a *HabiStat Dimming* thermostat and the latter with a *HabiStat Pulse Proportional* thermostat for precise control. Hot spots should be maintained for the same day length as the lights, sixteen hours in summer, eight in winter.

**Cage Decor:** *Repti-Sand, Desert, Savannah or Rain Forest Substrates*, all used as a dry cage base. These will blot up and 'clump' any fouling by the lizards. Clumps of waste can then be removed without cleaning the whole tank out. *Cork Bark Logs or Slabs* could be used to make an interesting three dimensional display. Draping *Repti-Vines* in the cage will provide refuges the lizards can hide in or move through to loosen shedding skin. *Repti-rock* caves and water dishes would lend even more functionality and security.

### Cage Set Up

The cage should be set up to allow an active lizard plenty of scope to climb, bask in a hot spot, move to a cooler spot, drink and hunt for food. The lizards should also be able to secrete themselves into refuges and rub themselves against something when shedding their skin.

## Shopping List

Minimum for a juvenile lizard:

- **Vivaria**
- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** 6x11/7w
- **Basking Spot Lamp**
- **Reptile D<sub>3</sub> Lights** 18"/15w
- **Arcadia Control Units** 15w,
- **Thermometer**, Alcohol
- **Repti-rock Dish & Hide**
- **Repti-Sand**
- **Repton**

Other items that may be purchased include those in the following list. Not all are required and several alternatives are suggested.

- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** (6x11/7w, 11x11/12w, 17x11/20w, 23x11/28w, 29x11/35w, 35x11/42w & 49x11/55w) & **Strips** (17x6/10w, 23x6/15w, 35x6/22w & 47x6/30w)
- **Ceramics Bulb Heaters** (60w, 100w, 150w, 250w, Reflectors & Holders)
- **Thermometers** (Alcohol, dial, minimum - maximum & electronic digital)
- **Hygrometers** (Dial & electronic digital)
- **HabiStat Thermostats & Accessories** (Mat-Stat 100w, Temperature Thermostat 300w, Twin Channel Thermostat 2x300w, Dimming Thermostat 600w, Pulse Proportional Thermostat 600w, both the last two models are available with a night time temperature drop facility.)
- **Sun, Moon & Sun & Moon Switches, Night Eye, Cool Control Thermostats and MiniFans.**
- **Repti-rock Dishes Hides & Caves**
- **Repti-Vines**
- **Repti-Sand**
- **Desert Substrate**
- **Rain Forest Substrate**
- **Cork Bark**
- **Reptile D<sub>3</sub> lights** (18"/15w & 24"/20w)
- **Natural Sunlight Lights** (18"/15w & 24"/18w)
- **Arcadia Control Units** (15w, 2x15w, 18w, 2x18w, 20w & 2x20w)
- **Frozen Mouse 'Pinkies'**
- **Crickets** &/or **Locusts** &/or **Mealworms** & **Waxworms**
- **Repton**
- **Mealworm Diet Plus**
- **Cricket Diet Plus**
- **Reptasol**
- **ProBalance**
- **Vetaclean**
- **Vetadine**
- **Vetasept Surgical Scrub**
- **Vetasept Hand Rub**
- **Books & Leaflets**



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### Spiny and other small to medium sized lizards...

#### ...Biology

Spiny lizards are all lizards from the family known as Iguanids. They are mainly small to medium sized lizards that come from the New World. The tail is about half the total length. They are often attractively coloured with shades of grey, brown and green predominating. Some of the males also have patches of blue to make them even more handsome.

#### ...Housing

Spiny Lizards are best housed in as large a cage as possible. Because of their rapid rate of growth and the heating and lighting equipment they need, purpose made vivaria are probably the most appropriate. The types with sliding glass doors to the front being especially resistant to escape. Another often used cage is a converted aquarium. A special adapting lid is used to contain the reptiles and attach the heating and lighting equipment that may be used.

As a guide, the cage recommended should be a minimum 60 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm for a pair of small specimens but 100 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm for an adult pair of the larger type like Desert Spiny Lizards. Of course, the cage could be larger as this would allow the animal room to grow and make it easier for the owner to manage the environment. The cage should be set up in a manner similar to the diagram over leaf. It will be necessary to provide a local hot spot near 40°C, while the coolest part of the cage should be nearer 28°C. The hot spot can easily be arranged by installing a *Basking Spot Lamp*. To ensure the cage does not overheat, the lamp is best controlled with a *HabiStat Dimming Thermostat*. White and UV light, from a lamp like a *Reptile D<sub>3</sub>* tube, will be needed and should be present for a similar period as the hot spot; about sixteen hours per day in summer dropping to eight in winter.

Much of the success achieved in keeping Spiny Lizards will come from the skilful manipulation of ventilation. The lizards require lowish humidity and cannot stand stagnant air conditions. Fresh air moving into the cage is essential. Use the upward draughts caused by heated air rising to flush out the cage and drag fresh air in. A light occasional misting with a hand sprayer will provide any moisture required.

#### ...Husbandry

Spiny Lizards may be kept singly or in groups. Of course the more lizards kept in each cage, the larger the cage should be. Males will tend to fight as they reach maturity and no more than one should be present in the cage. In any case, there should be plenty of retreats and visual screens. Watch out for bullying, particularly among juveniles.

These lizards may become quite tame but do not really like being handled. Some individuals are a little nervous and will not hesitate to bite if restrained. The bite, whilst not as dangerous as that of a pet dog or cat, can be a hefty pinch. The teeth are, however, tiny and will not inflict anything more than a superficial wound. The lizards will wriggle if held and try to escape. The tail is easily shed and should not be grasped. Once shed, however, a new tail will grow in time. So to sum up; only handle the lizard if absolutely necessary and always hold the head and body, not the tail. As a last caution, watch out for the nails, which may be sharp and inclined to scratch.

In time the cage will begin to look scruffy as faeces and debris builds up. As everything recommended for the cage is washable or disposable, a good clean out is easily done. Eight to ten weeks would be about as long as the cage could be left before being completely cleaned. The cage set up advised in this

leaflet is practicable and can be made to look pleasing to the eye. If a more natural set up is envisaged, it may be best to wait until some experience is gained. In any case, some of the very informative books on Lizards in general and Spiny Lizards in particular could be investigated.

#### ...Food & Feeding

Insects like crickets and locusts form the staple diet in captivity. Mealworms can also be fed. Insects should be dusted with *Repton*. Alternatively, the live food can be fed *Cricket Diet Plus* and *Mealworm Diet Plus* respectively to 'load' the insect with vitamins and minerals but do not dust *and* gut load! Other insects that are eaten include Waxworms but these are best given only occasionally as a treat. Another occasional meal that is accepted by the larger specimens are the commercially prepared, fresh meat reptile diets or a frozen rodent pup that has been thoroughly thawed. With all food it is important to balance the nutrients. These lizards grow very rapidly, so any dietary deficiency will quickly result in deformity. Calcium and the associated vitamin D<sub>3</sub> being particularly important.

Live food is only eaten if it is seen to move and will usually be jumped upon and grabbed with the mouth. One lizard may eat up to ten or more insects at one meal; it will depend upon their size. Feed the lizards every other day with just enough to be completely eaten in fifteen minutes. Try not to leave an excess of uneaten insects in the cage.

In addition to live food a portion of sweet fruit, leafy vegetable or salad could be offered occasionally.

A small water dish kept full of fresh water should always be available. The lizards may drink from this but should not be allowed to bathe in it. The more usual method of gaining moisture is to lick water droplets from dew off the scales. This can be replicated by giving a fine misting from a hand sprayer. Make sure the lizard and any of the cage dampened dries out within about half an hour. Good ventilation and adequate heat will keep the cage dry.

#### ...Reproduction

Male spiny Lizards are proportionately larger than the females and they have broader heads. The males have brighter colours, especially blue and have a different pattern to the females. Other characteristics include a more bulbous base to the tail and pronounced femoral pores. For precise information, look up the details of the species being kept.

A period of courtship proceeds mating and during this time much activity can be expected. Eggs are laid after mating and they may take several weeks to hatch. A few species, like Yarrow's Spiny Lizard are live bearers. To grow to adult in captivity may take as short a time as twelve months but in the wild, two to five years may elapse. A cooler winter period will be needed to condition the lizards for breeding in the following season.

#### ...Health & Disease

Spiny Lizards live for a few years in the wild but seem to live even longer in captivity. They do not suffer from many diseases and veterinary attention is rarely needed. An environment and diet as described in this leaflet will preclude most problems. The most often encountered disease will be a metabolic bone disorder caused by insufficient vitamin D<sub>3</sub> or calcium. Good practice, hygiene and first aid will probably deal with rest. If real disease is discovered, a vet must of course, be consulted. Pet lizards do not pose a real threat to human health. All the normal hygiene precautions regarding humans and animals should, however, be observed.