

Collared Lizard Care

Crotaphytus collaris



WHEN DO I SEE A VET?

- Annual wellness exam for physical exam, fecal, and bloodwork baseline testing
- Pre and post brumation (hibernation) wellness exams
- Not eating or pooping for over a week
- Open mouth breathing or noise while breathing
- Diarrhea, blood in feces, vomiting, or regurgitation
- Retained shed, redness, swelling, or open wounds of the skin
- Enlarged eyes, swelling or bleeding of the mouth
- Any health concerns or questions

Husbandry

Enclosure Sizes

Babies: A 40-gallon breeder (36" L x 18" W x 16" H) or larger enclosure

Adults: A 75-gallon (48" L x 18" W x 21" H) or larger enclosure

Enclosures should have a basking area, hide, water dish, and décor to provide enrichment to your collared lizard. Collared lizards are very active terrestrial reptiles that require more floorspace than vertical space.

Housing

Collared Lizards are 'Harem Like' reptiles where one male is commonly found with one or multiple females in the wild. Males will show aggression towards each other and should never be housed together. Housing males together is a risk for injury and fighting that can be harmful to your collared lizard's health. General rule is a 75-gallon can hold one male and two females comfortably and adding a foot of width can comfortably reduce stress for another female, however males can get overwhelmed with too many females present. It is always good to remember the larger the enclosure the less stress and better chances your collared lizard has to thrive.

Substrate/Flooring

An ideal substrate is "WASHED" playsand. Fine washed playsand has sharp silicates removed and is an acceptable substrate to be used. It is important to monitor hydration, volumes of sand being consumed. Other substrates include eco earth, top soils, and even washed playsand and soil mixes. It is important to change our substrates routinely to prevent overgrowth of unwanted bacteria or parasites, unless a successful bioactive enclosure is established. Tile, paper towels, slate, and reptile carpets are acceptable as well, but will eliminate any digging enrichment given from a natural substrate.

Lighting and Heating

Proper temperatures and lighting are essential for the development, growth, and maintenance of your collared lizard.

Lighting: Collared lizards are a long day basking diurnal desert species. They require a high output UVB lighting for proper vitamin D3 synthesis starting with their skin. Ideal hours of daylight to nightlight are 12 hours on and 12 hours off, and this can be achieved by a timer

connected to their lights. UVB lights lose strength over time even though they may still emit light and should be changed every 6 months. Sources of natural sunlight are great for collared lizards when temperatures are in their healthy range. It is important to know that windows and glass block UVB rays and screens and mesh can decrease UVB strength to your collared lizard. Avoid placing glass enclosures in direct sunlight as this can heat up much higher than anticipated.

Recommended UVB lights include:

T5 Strip Lights:

Arcadia T5 D3+ Reptile Lamp 12 or 14% UVB

Zoomed Reptisun 10.0 UVB T5-HO

Mercury Vapor Bulbs:

Zoomed Reptisun 100 or 160 Watt

MegaRay 100 or 160 Watt

Metal Halide:

Osram GmbH Ultravitalux 300W

Heating: Collared lizards are ectotherms or poikilothermous meaning they get their body temperature from the environment. This is key for proper metabolism and digestion of their food as well as overall health and function. During the day your collared lizard should have a basking area that reaches 95-105°F, with a cool side having an ambient air temperature of 80-85°F. During the night ideal temperatures should remain between 70-75°F, avoiding any temperatures below 65°F due to risk of causing digestive issues and other illnesses.

Humidity and Hydration

Humidity and hydration play several important roles in your collared lizards health. Humidity assists in proper shedding and rate of dehydration, but cause respiratory issues if too high. Ideal humidity for a collared lizard is 20-40% humidity and should be monitored using a hygrometer inside the enclosure. It is important to have a clean water source at all times in your collared lizard's enclosure to allow for drinking and proper hydration. Additional methods to stimulate drinking include morning misting, a moving water source, and weekly soakings.

Feeding

Nutrition is a very important part of allowing for proper growth and development of a collared lizard. Understanding and knowing the appropriate food choices can help your collared lizard stay healthy and avoid many medical complications. Baby and juvenile collared lizard can be fed as much as 2-3 times a day, while adults can be fed 1-2 times a day or as needed to maintain

desired weight. It is important to supplement your collared lizard's food with calcium and vitamin dustings to provide additional nutrients. Dusting your feeder insects 2-3 times a week with calcium is needed for a collared lizard. Consult with a veterinarian to discuss the possible need of adding vitamin D3 to your calcium dusting as in some cases it may be recommended. In addition, having a calcium dust or multivitamin with Vitamin A is important to maintain a healthy collared lizard and should also be provided at least 2-3 times a week. A list of recommended supplementations can be found below. Collared Lizards are insectivore aka carnivores and eat mainly insects. It is good to note that greens can be offered, but not on a routine basis as collared lizards lack the GI flora for absorbing nutrients well from green and have been shown to have multiple health complications with a greens being a substantial part of their diet. Offering greens no more than once a week is acceptable if your collared lizard will eat them as they tend to prefer moving prey. There are several appropriate methods to feeding including offering 2-3 dusted insects in the morning and then evening, offering 4-5 dusted insects once daily, or even offering 5-8 dusted insects every other day depending on the age. Maintaining a balance and routine diet is important to maintaining stable health in a collared lizard.

Main Insect Food Sources: (~90% of Insect Diet)

Crickets, dubia roaches, or grasshoppers due to low fat to high protein ratios.

Snack Insect Sources: (~10% of Insect Diet)

Superworms, hornworms, phoenix worms, silkworms, or butterworms due to high fat or low protein ratios. (Hornworms are a good source of fluids, and Phoenix worms are a good source of calcium)

Recommended Dusting Supplements:

Repashy Calcium Plus Reptile Supplement (includes a good source of vitamin A)

Flukers Calcium without D3 and phosphorus free

ZooMed Repti Calcium without D3

Enrichment

Enrichment is an important and stimulating part of a collared lizard's day to day life.

Several Enrichment options are listed below:

Thrive Feeding Ball – Allows your collared lizard to stay stimulated and rotate a plastic ball to gain access to a food source.

Obstacle Mazes – Creating mazes or obstacles that require the collared lizard to move to get to its food stimulates activity and exercise for your collared lizard.

Supervised Time Outside Their Enclosure – Make sure to have a clean, item free area where you can supervise the activity of your collared lizard. Make sure no other pets including dogs, or cats have access to the collared lizard when outside its enclosure.

Outdoor Enclosure – This is beneficial by not only providing natural sunlight on days where weather is appropriate, but stimulation of another environment. Make sure that the weather is appropriate to their needed temperatures, provide them with shelter and a water source, and do not leave them unsupervised unless they are in an enclosure safe from predators and secure from escaping.

Handling – This is a great way to build trust and enrichment for your collared lizard. Starting slow and encouraging with tasty treats can help encourage your collared lizard to be handled very well.

Is My Collared Lizard A Male or Female?

As adults Collared Lizards have clear characteristics that make them sexually dimorphic, meaning we can visually differentiate a male from a female. In addition, the most reliable way in determining sex can be done by a skilled veterinary professional through several methods at a younger age including probing for hemipene pockets, endoscopic sex determination, and ultrasound sex determination. Listed below are some characteristics that you look for to visually differentiate a male and female.

Femoral Pores – As adults, male collared lizards have more prominent and larger femoral pores. These can be found in a line running along the ventral (bottom) aspect of their femur, giving them the name femoral pores. As adults, females tend to have very small to almost nonvisible femoral pores present. It is important to note that these can become impacted and enlarged if there isn't appropriate humidity and surfaces in the enclosure to allow for appropriate expression. If you notice enlarged or hard femoral pores you should see a veterinarian for proper treatment.

Hemipene Bulges – Adult male collared lizards will have enlarged bulges around the ventral (bottom) aspect of their tail base just behind the vent. This can be easier or harder to see depending on the weight and body condition of the collared lizard. Females lack hemipenes and do not develop the same bulge seen in the males.

Dewlap Coloration – Another visual characteristic that males tend to display during maturity and mating season is a dark colored/pattern spotted dewlap. This can be very reliable as females will have very small to no pattern/spotting at all. This alone should not be used to determine sex, but can be used along with other visual characteristics.

Post-Anal Scaling – Another visual characteristic that males tend to have larger post-anal scaling just caudal or past the vent of the lizards ventrum or bottom of their tail. This can be very reliable as females will have very small scaling, however there are few incidences where females can also have large scaling as well, but this is very rare. Therefore, again this alone should not be used to determine sex, but can be used along with other visual characteristics

Post-Anal Spotting – A visual characteristic found in female collared lizard who tend to have two dark spots to the left and right just caudal or past the vent of the lizards ventrum or bottom of their tail. This can be very reliable finding in females where males should not have any spotting present. However again there have been rare cases of males with slight spotting or females with no spotting. Therefore, again this alone should not be used to determine sex, but can be used along with other visual characteristics