



Bobtail & Bluetongue Care Sheet

Bobtails (also known as Shinglebacks, Sleepy lizards and Pine Cone lizards) and bluetongues are beautiful lizards that can make fantastic pets. They generally grow to a length of around 35-50cm depending on which species you choose to keep. All are primarily diurnal, although some are active at night during hot weather.

Depending on where you live these species can be kept indoors or outdoors.

OUTDOOR HOUSING: Bluetongues and bobtails are relatively simple to keep and make great

pets. They are best kept outside if you live in an area where they are native. For example, a bluetongue from the Kimberley should not be maintained outdoors in Perth during winter. The enclosure could consist of a fenced off garden area, with the fence extending 50 cm below ground and 80 cm above it. Other alternatives are modified aviaries or small empty swimming pools. The enclosure should receive at least 8 hours of sun each day but always have a shaded area as well. A permanently dry area is very important during periods of wet weather. It is recommended that a shade cloth or bird netting cover be used to exclude predators. Cage furnishings should be kept simple. If they are outside then during winter it is important to provide a layer of leaf litter or dry grass below a rain-proof shelter at one end of the cage so that your lizards can brumate (undergo less activity in a similar way to how some species hibernate). Enclosures must be secure and escape proof.



INDOOR HOUSING: They can also be kept indoors in a smaller enclosure for one or two adults. This would need to be top-ventilated, providing a minimum of 100 x 50 cm of ground space and provide a basking area heated to about 35°C by a spotlight for several hours each day. It would also require lighting with a full spectrum UV fluorescent tube for 8-12 hours each day. This needs to be tested regularly or replaced at least every six months to maintain its effectiveness. Include a low, flat hide box and leaf litter or dead grass for shelter.





WATER: Water can be provided in a very shallow, non-spillable container such as a ceramic bowl. It is important to make sure that they can get out of the water bowl if they go into it.

FOOD: A variety of foods should be fed including soft and hard fruits and vegetables, daisies and hibiscus flowers, large insects, small mice and some raw meats. Dusting of their food with a calcium/vitamin supplement is recommended. Vary the diet as much as possible to provide a healthy balance. These lizards will eat snails, but be aware of collecting these in areas where poison baits are laid. Feed adults once a week and young individuals every 3 or 4 days.

CAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR/BREEDING: Can be timid at first but will settle and become tolerant of gentle handling. Never hold your lizard upside down and try to always provide something for its feet to contact. After a few days without exposure to humans, some will revert to their natural defensive behaviour of opening mouth and hissing when approached. This generally quickly subsides again. They have small peg-like teeth, but strong jaws. **CAUTION:** These lizards can deliver a painful and bloody bite.



Sexing is difficult in these lizards; however we have had good success with utilizing a contrast media and radiographs (x-rays). All have live young generally in late summer or early autumn, with bluetongues generally producing more than four in a litter and bobtails less than this.

DISEASES: A clean artificial reptile environment with the appropriate husbandry mentioned above will usually result in your pets remaining healthy. Quarantine newly acquired animals for at least a month before introducing them to those already being kept.

We recommend that you get your reptiles checked every 6-12 months as they are very good at hiding illness with symptoms often being very subtle in the early stages.

