



## Blue Tounge Lizard Care

Blue Tongue Lizards get their name from the bright blue colour of their tongue. They are a common skink in most parts of Australia and currently a license is not required to keep Blotched and Eastern Blue Tongues in Victoria. With the proper husbandry and care they can provide you with years of pleasure.

A post purchase examination by a reptile veterinarian is recommended. You can discuss husbandry, feeding and any concerns about your pet at this time.

In these care sheets we will discuss the requirements for the more commonly available Blotched and Eastern varieties. Other less common varieties, for example the Centralian and Northern Blue Tongues, have much more specialized requirements and are best left to experienced licensed keepers.

### Housing

Blue Tongues are completely ground dwelling lizards, they love to hide in leaf litter, in plants and dense grasses as well as beneath rocks and other solid objects. As with any captive reptile, the enclosure must allow the lizards to behave naturally as they would in the wild.

If the species you own occurs naturally in the area, then they can be kept outdoors. The basic outdoor enclosure must have a number of features. Firstly it must be escape proof. Even though blue tongues are ground dwelling, they can climb, so their enclosure must have smooth walls at least 100cm high. Blue tongues are expert diggers, so the smooth walls must also extend at least 50cm below the ground. The outdoor enclosure must be situated in an area that gets 8-10 hours of direct sunlight a day, and needs to have plenty of shelters and shaded area where the lizards can escape the heat.

Blue tongues housed outdoors will hibernate over the cold winter months and need to be provided with a safe dry warm environment. This is best done with a deep layer of dry leaves or grass that is kept dry in constructed shelters.

To house one or two adults indoors the minimum floor area should be 75cm X 30cm. There should be plenty of shelter and hide areas. These can be provided with dry leaf litter, a cardboard box or consider an attractive artificial cave from a specialist pet shop. A shallow water bowl is required for soaking and drinking from, the water should be changed daily.



The enclosures should be cleaned at least weekly, daily for juveniles. Contact your veterinarian for advice on a suitable & safe disinfectant. Avoid sand or gravel substrates, as these can be swallowed resulting in illness or even death. Newspaper is a cheap, effective and safe substrate to use. An alternative is artificial grass matting, available from hardware stores or Clark Rubber. Have two pieces cut to size and alternate them for easy cleaning.

Separate animals based on size – only keep lizards with a similar size together - otherwise bite wounds will result.

## Lighting

Bluetongue Lizards require UV light, ideally sunlight. Those housed outside with 8-10 hours of direct sunlight will not need any supplementation. Bluetongues housed inside need artificial UV provided for them. The best way to provide your lizards with the UV they need is with a fluorescent light. There are many types of fluorescent lights that are now being marketed as full-spectrum (daylight). Make sure the tube you use is specifically designed for reptile use, for example, Repti-Glo UV fluorescent tubes should be replaced every 12 months, even if they are still running, as their UV output diminishes with time. (Tip! Remember to write the date on each tube when it is installed with a marker pen).

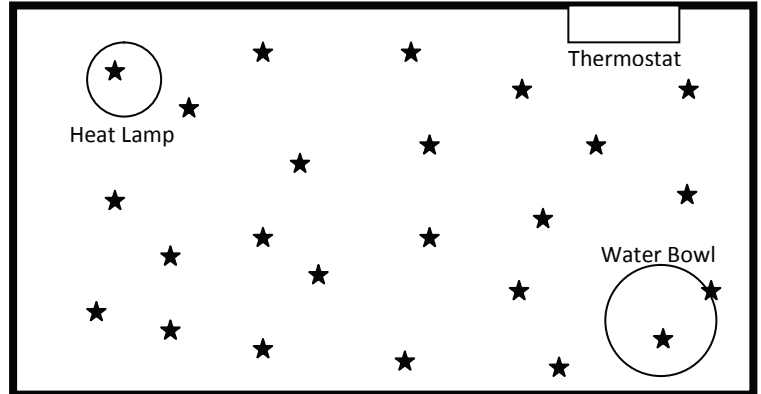
Fluorescent fittings should always be within 60cm from the enclosure floor as the UV emitted will only penetrate this far. Lights should be placed on a timer for at least 8-10 hours a day. For breeding, you may need to alter your day length with the seasons. Make sure there is no glass or perspex between the UV light and the lizard as this will filter out all the UV from reaching your lizard, rendering it useless and wasting your money!

## Temperature / Heating

Reptiles cannot regulate their body temperature like mammals and rely on the environment to provide warmth to maintain their body temperature at their Preferred Body Temperature (PBT). The PBT for Blue Tongues ranges from 28 – 32 °C, this variation depends on whether they originate from warmer or cooler areas. In order for you lizard to regulate its body temperature, there must be areas of the cage that allows your lizard to heat up beyond its PBT and cool down below its PBT. This is called Behavioural Thermoregulation. Thus the hot end of the enclosure should reach mid to high 30's°C, decreasing to mid 20's°C at the cooler end. This variation in temperatures across the cage is called the Thermal Gradient. The Thermal Gradient is essential for a happy, healthy (and long) life. We strongly recommend plotting a temperature map for your enclosure to assess that it has a suitable thermal gradient. Take 10-30 temperatures from around the cage and plot them on a graph. You should get a graph that looks roughly like the one in the following images:

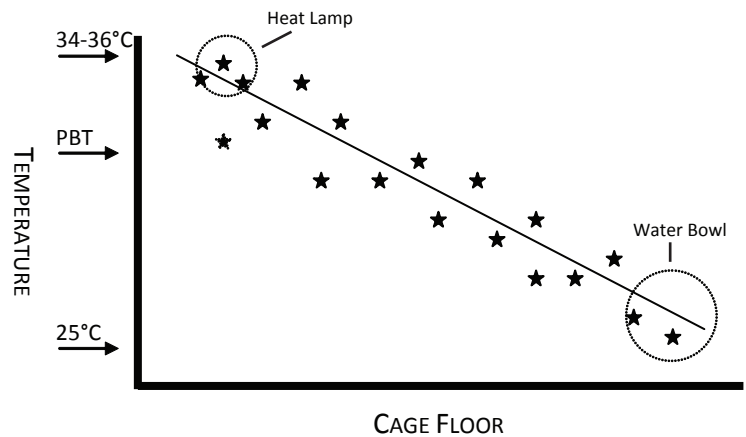


## Map of the enclosure (Cage Floor)



★ = Temperature Reading

## Graph of the temperature readings



**NB:** All heating must be controlled by a thermostat placed in the cooler end of the cage

## Feeding

Blue Tongue Lizards are omnivorous – they eat both vegetarian and carnivore ingredients. A ‘smorgasbord’ approach to feeding is best, offer a range of fruit and vegetables from the following list: Apple, banana, kiwi fruit, melon, grapes, canned fruits, sliced Chinese greens, spinach, and lettuce, squash, zucchini, sweet potato, broccoli, beans, grated carrot, broccoli, mushrooms, etc. Chopped chunks of apple provide a good chew and are very good for the teeth and gums. Carrot must always be grated as chopped chunks have been known to cause an intestinal blockage.

While fruit and vegetables should be 70% - 80% of the diet it is necessary to add a protein component. This is best achieved by adding canned dog food to the mix at the rate of 20% - 30% of the total meal. Canned dog food contains adequate calcium and vitamins. Insects and snails can also be fed. If insects are more than 10% of the diet then they must be “dusted” with appropriate calcium and vitamin powders. Snails must only be collected from areas that are free of snail bait. Young Blue tongues should be offered food twice daily, while adults are fed 2-3 times a week.



## Disease Prevention

- It is very important to maintain a high standard of hygiene with regular cleaning.
- A sample of faeces should be presented yearly to your veterinarian for analysis for worms and other parasites.
- Avoid access to toxic plants and substrates that might be eaten such as sand or gravel.
- Diets should be supplemented with calcium and vitamins unless canned dog food is fed.
- UV lights should be replaced every 6-12 months. Consider regular access to sunlight once or twice a week.

## Is my Blue Tounge sick?

A Blue Tounge Lizard that is not well may show one or more of the following signs:

- Lameness / not using a leg
- Swollen toes
- Changes to the colour of the scales
- Listlessness/ Inactive
- Not eating/ refusing food
- Sneezing
- Sore Inflamed Mouths
- Incomplete shedding

**Seek veterinary attention if you notice any of these signs.**

## Enjoy your Blue Tounge Lizard!