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This handout is intended to provide only very general guidelines. Consult with your veterinarian about other aspects of advanced care that can be considered to ensure adequate health.

General Information

Blue Tongued Skinks are a species of lizard native to Australia, New Guinea and some parts of Indonesia. As their name implies, they have a bright blue tongue that can be utilized as a defense mechanism. These lizards give live birth and reach an adult size of 18-24 inches.

Lifespan

Blue Tongued Skinks can live up to 15-20 years in captivity and reach sexual maturity around 2-3 years of age.

Sexing

Sexing is very difficult in this species. Males are typically larger and have wider heads compared to females. Occasionally when defecating, male skinks will evert their hemipenes which can be helpful in determining sex.

Housing

A 20-gallon aquarium is appropriate for a juvenile Blue Tongued Skink, however they grow quickly, and floor space is crucial. A 40-gallon tank at minimum is needed for an adult, but you will find that Blue Tongued Skinks will utilize all of the space that you provide. Blue Tongued Skinks do best when they are kept alone. Females can occasionally be kept together but should be monitored for any signs of aggression and should be separated if necessary.

Substrate

Blue Tongued Skinks do well on a variety of substrates. Newspapers or cage carpet are both great options and allow for easy cleaning, but don't hold humidity well or allow for burrowing (a natural behavior for them). A humid hide box with damp moss may be needed to ensure that they don't have issues shedding. Fir and cypress mulch are preferred for maintaining humidity and to allow for burrowing. Clean leaf litter in addition to your substrate is a nice option for allowing your skink to burrow and perform natural behaviors while ensuring that they feel safe and secure. Always provide appropriate hides in multiple areas of the cage so that your skink can move around to thermoregulate; but nothing too high since they're not great climbers.

Lighting and temperature

Blue Tongued Skinks, like most reptiles, need a temperature gradient in order to thermoregulate or maintain their body temperatures. There should be a basking site on the warm side of the cage that reaches **~90-100 degrees**, while the cool side should be around **75-82 degrees**. Your skink's cage can drop to 70 degrees at night.

A UVB bulb should be provided at all times to allow for your pet to process calcium and prevent Metabolic Bone Disease. A commercially available UVB bulb is necessary as UVB does not penetrate glass or plastic so having the cage near a window does not work. After about 6-9 months of use, most UVB bulbs will stop emitting adequate levels of UVB, so it's important to change the bulb every 6-9 months.

Water

Fresh water should always be available in a shallow water dish. Occasional misting may be helpful to maintain humidity and ensure your lizard is adequately hydrated.

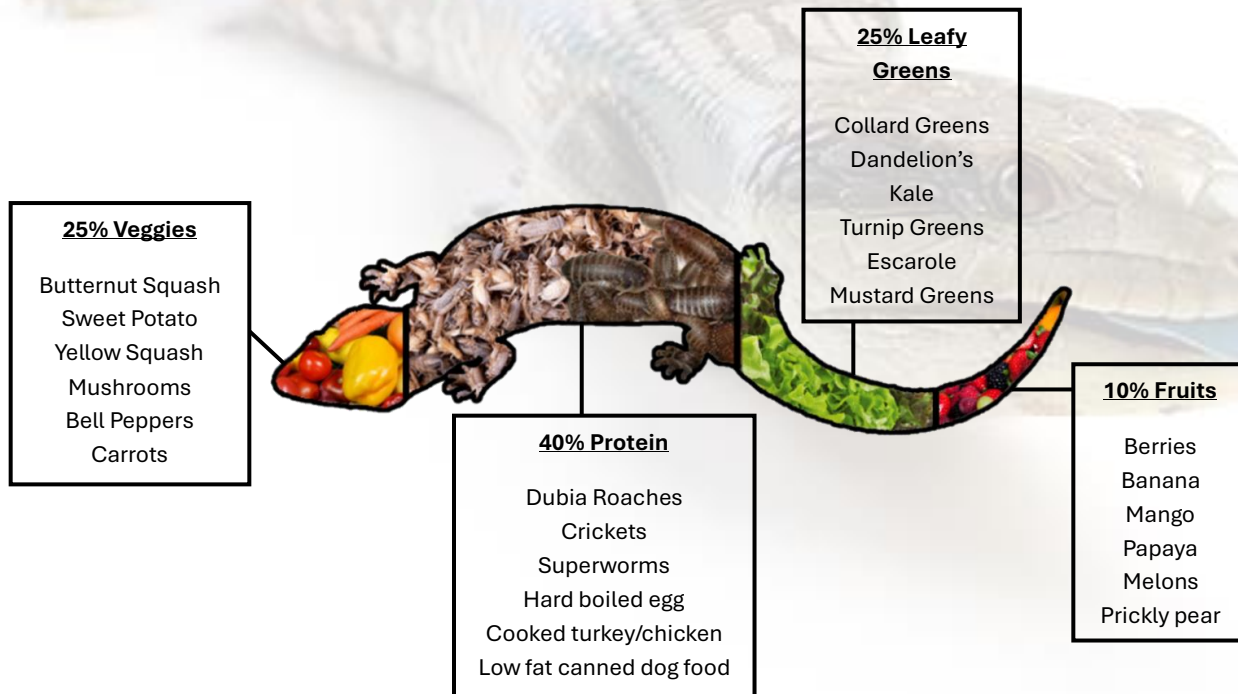
Humidity

Northern Blue Tongued Skinks do best when humidity stays between 25-40%, while subspecies from Indonesia or New Guinea require 40-45%. A commercially available hygrometer will help to make sure your humidity stays at appropriate levels.

Diet

Blue tongued skinks are true omnivores, and variety is the spice of life and ensures appropriate nutrition. Diets that are too high in fat and protein will lead to obesity and shorten the life of your skink. Approximately 50% of your skink's diet should be made up of vegetables and dark, leafy greens. 40% of your skink's diet should be made of high-quality proteins, primarily insects. Make sure to gutload any feeder insects with fresh produce and dark, leafy greens. The last 10% of your skink's diet can be made up of fruit.

Calcium (without vitamin D3) should be sprinkled on food 3-4 times weekly until your skink is 2 years of age, then this can be decreased to 1-2 times weekly. A multivitamin can be used one monthly as well.



Common medical conditions

Metabolic bone disease

- This is caused by a deficiency of calcium, ultraviolet light, and/or vitamin D3 that can lead to numerous problems including poor bone quality and pathologic fractures.

References

Animal Hospital in Centennial, CO. Aurora Animal Hospital. (n.d.). <https://www.auroraanimalhospital.com/>

Divers, S. J., & Stahl, S. J. (2019). *Mader's reptile and Amphibian Medicine and Surgery*. Elsevier.