

Brief Description

Blue Tongued Skinks are a species of lizard from Australia, New Guinea and some parts of Indonesia. As their name suggests, they have a bright blue tongue that is flashed with an open mouth as a defense mechanism. The most commonly found subspecies in the pet trade is the Northern Blue Tongued Skink from Australia. These lizards give live birth and reach an adult size of 18-24 inches. They have become increasingly popular in the pet trade due to their docile nature with time and socialization.



Lifespan

With appropriate husbandry, these lizards can easily reach 15-20 years or more in age.

Sexing

Sexing Blue Tongued Skinks is very difficult as there aren't obvious differences between the sexes. Occasionally, when a male defecates, he may evert his hemipenes which can be helpful in determining your skink's sex.

Caging

A 20 gallon aquarium is appropriate for a baby, but these lizards grow quickly and floor space is key. A floor plan of 36 inches by 18 inches (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. A screen top to prevent escapes or prevent other pets from investigating too closely is also needed. Blue Tongued Skinks do best when kept alone. Females can occasionally be kept together, but watch for aggression and separation may be necessary.

Substrate

Blue Tongued Skinks do well on a variety of substrates. Newspaper, recycled paper substrates, or cage carpet are all valid options and allow for easy cleaning, but don't hold humidity well. A humid hide box with damp sphagnum moss may be needed to ensure that your pet doesn't have issues while shedding. Fir and cypress mulch are preferred for maintaining humidity and because these lizards frequently like to burrow. 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 the best climbers.

Lighting and Temperature

Blue Tongued Skinks need a temperature gradient in order to thermoregulate. There should be a basking site on the warm side of the cage that reaches **90-100 degrees**, while the cool side should stay around **75-82 degrees**. A low wattage under tank heater can be used to help reach this temperature on the warm side in addition to a basking bulb that should be turned off at night to provide 8-12 hours of "daylight". The cool side of your skink's cage can drop to 70 degrees at night.

A UVB bulb should be provided to allow 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. Look for UVB listed specifically on retail packaging before buying. After about 6 months of use most bulbs will stop emitting adequate levels of UVB, even though they are still shining, so it's important to change the bulb every 6 months.

Humidity

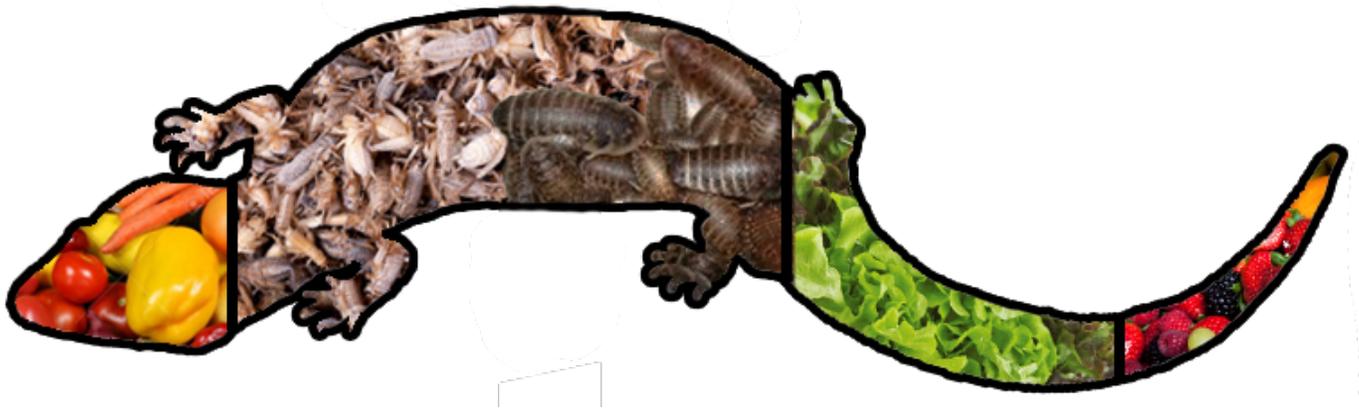
Northern Blue Tongued Skinks do best when humidity stays between 25-40%, while subspecies from Indonesia or New Guinea require 40-45%. A commercially available hygrometer will help to make sure your humidity stays at appropriate levels.

Water

Fresh water in shallow water bowl should always be provided and occasional misting is helpful to maintain humidity and ensure hydration.

Food

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. Look for collard, turnip, mustard and dandelion greens, cooked squash, hibiscus and other edible flowers or bell pepper. 40% of your skink's diet should be made of high quality proteins. Crickets and dubia roaches are great nutritionally and provide enrichment and exercise. Make sure to gutload any feeder insects with fresh produce and dark, leafy greens. Commercially available canned snails, are relished in addition to hardboiled egg, superworms, rare pinkie mice, boiled chicken, or premium canned dog or cat food. Make sure that you feed less cat food than you would dog food since it has a higher protein content. The last 10% of your skink's diet can be made up of fruit including raspberries, strawberries, bananas, blueberries, melon, or papaya.



Blue Tongue Skinks are Omnivores

<p>40% Animal Protein</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubia roaches • Crickets • Superworms • Hard boiled egg • Cooked turkey/chicken • Low fat canned dog food 	<p>25% Veggies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butternut squash • Sweet potato • Yellow squash • Mushrooms • Bell peppers • Carrots 	<p>25% Leafy Greens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collard greens • Dandelions • Kale • Turnip greens • Escarole • Mustard Greens 	<p>10% Fruits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berries • Banana • Mango • Papaya • Melons • Prickly pear
<p>Percentages can be used for individual meals or as a guide for the average of meals over the week.</p>			
<p>Supplementation: Calcium (without D3) sprinkled on food 3-4 times weekly until 2 years of age then 1-2 times weekly. A multivitamin can be used less frequently (once or twice a month) if desired but with good nutrition this is not always necessary.</p>			