

# *Elands Veterinary Clinic.*

CLIENT INFORMATION SHEET.

## **CAPTIVE HUSBANDRY OF THE GREEN IGUANA (*Iguana iguana*)**



**Elands Veterinary Clinic.**

Station Road, Dunton Green, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN13 2XA (01732) 452333

Branch: 95 High Street, Westerham, Kent. TN16 1RE (01959) 562666

**T**he Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) is a large, arboreal, tropical lizard of Central/South America. This species is herbivorous and eats leaves, flowers, fruits and vegetables. Iguanas regulate their body temperature by basking in the sun, seeking temperatures above 29.5C (85F). They are solitary animals but congregate for mating. Adult animals may reach 2m (6 feet) and weigh 8kg (18lbs). Untamed specimens should be handled with caution, paying attention to the claws and tail.

### **CARE IN CAPTIVITY**

A correct captive environment is critical for the continued health of any iguana. Iguanas are best housed in wooden vivaria or room sized enclosures. A juvenile can be kept in a vivarium measuring 1.2m x 0.6m x 0.6m while an adult will require an enclosure of at least 2m x 2m x 1.5m. The vivarium should be high to allow the provision of secure branches for climbing. For hygienic reasons the floor is most easily lined with newspaper or artificial turf. Avoid sand, gravel and soil. Replace the floor covering daily or weekly depending on the degree of contamination. Clean weekly using Tamodine-E (Vetark) which is available from the practice reception.

### **TEMPERATURE, LIGHTING AND HUMIDITY**

Heat should be provided by a background heaters (tubular heaters, infra red ceramic trough heaters etc) and a radiant day time heater (infra red ceramic bulbs, spot lights, mercury/metal halide lamps). The diurnal temperature variation is vital for continued health. A daytime air temperature gradient of 29.5-35C (85-95F) and a basking area of 36.5-38.5C (98-101F) are optimum. At night the basking area should be turned off and the air temperature lowered to 25C (77F). Provide natural sunlight whenever possible. All indoor vivaria must be equipped with a full spectrum light source (True-lite, Iguana Light, Reptisun, Life-Glo) which must be placed within 50cm of the basking sites, and replaced every 6-9 months. Maintain a 14 hour light, 10 hour dark photoperiod. Humidity of 80-100% is required for most of the day. Humidity can be increased by spraying or by placing a large water bowl near a heat source. Never sacrifice ventilation to increase humidity.

### **NUTRITION**

A varied vegetarian diet should be offered. Small amounts of high protein foods (tinned pet foods, chicken, boiled eggs etc) can be offered to juveniles as very occasional treats but it is now accepted that green iguanas are entirely herbivorous in the wild.

Vitamin/mineral supplementation is usually essential and we recommend the daily use of Nutrobal(Vetark) which is available from reception. Suitable plants include alfalfa (grass, pellets and sprouts); grass (fresh and sun-cured); lentils, green beans, peas (sprouts, fresh leaves, stems, blossoms and pods); carrot (grated root and green tops); kale; watercress; swiss chard; turnip (leaves and grated root); parsley; dandelion; escarole; iceberg lettuce; and in an emergency frozen mixed vegetables (thawed). Suitable fruits include apples and pears (chopped with peel but discard core and seeds), cranberries, blackberries, oranges, lemons, raspberries, damsons and figs. Wash all foods to remove any dirt and insecticides. Monitor meal times to ensure that certain food items are not singled out and left which will unbalance the diet. Commercial iguana diets are now available, and the Pretty Bird Iguana diets can be used to form up to 50% of the total diet.

All iguanas should be offered a diet consisting of 100% plant matter (including 5% fruit). High protein treats can be occasionally offered but are best avoided altogether. Finely chop all food items and mix thoroughly and feed twice daily when the lizard is first acquired. When feeding regularly, once daily feeding will suffice. Adult iguanas are also best fed once daily but can be offered coarsely chopped foods every other day. Iguanas consume most food between 10am and 4pm, offering food early in the morning or late in the evening is inappropriate.

### **DISEASES**

There are a large number of medical and surgical conditions that can occur in iguanas, however if properly maintained iguanas tend to remain healthy. Some of the more common conditions include metabolic bone disease, necrotic dermatitis (blister disease), burns, necrotic stomatitis (mouth rot), bladder stones, constipation, kidney disease, pre-ovulatory and post-ovulatory egg retention. All of these diseases are treatable but early diagnosis by a veterinary surgeon is vital. Elands Veterinary Clinic offers full in-house blood biochemistry, haematology, and faecal analyses. The practice also provides full hospitalisation facilities, radiography, endoscopy, propofol and isoflurane anaesthesia, and a fully equipped sterile theatre with electrosurgery and microsurgery facilities.