

# The Ultimate Iguana Care Handbook

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# Introduction

You want to own an iguana? Do you know what it takes to make that happen?

Owning an iguana is not something simple. You have to balance their living environment with their needs for the most natural levels of protection. If you don't invest the time in finding the right type of living area for your iguana and give him the proper care, he will not be as healthy as he should be. In fact, without the right environment, he will perish.

There are many people that don't invest enough time in determining the right living environment for their iguana. In the first chapter, we talk about just how important this fact is. The bottom line is that without a carefully controlled living environment, the iguana can become ill. The good news is that we've taken all of the guess work out of it.

You'll learn how to properly build a home for your pet, how to maintain it, how to properly feed and clean your iguana and even how to begin training your pet. With these things in place, you'll be able to bring home an iguana and call him your pet. And, he'll love you for doing so!

# **Chapter 1: Your Pet's Home**

Even before you consider purchasing an iguana, you must consider its needs for a proper home. Since the iguana's health is dependant on the actual environment that he lives in, it is essential that this part of the process happen first, before anything else.

Iguana's use their homes for more than just shelter. It is imperative that his home provides the necessary protection but also the right heat for his well being. Unlike the dog or other mammals, iguanas must have a well maintained climate in order to stay healthy.

This is due to the iguana's need for the wavelengths of the light within its home. They will use these wavelengths to aid in their metabolism as well as in their body chemistry.

## **What Was Home Like?**

If you consider where the iguana is from, you can see what his needs will be in the climate that you create for him. The extreme temperatures of that environment were also fairly humid. This combination is what his body is conditioned for and therefore must be replaced in the shelter you'll provide for him if he is to survive and be as healthy as he can be.

Without an environment that is conditioned for the right temperature and humidity, your iguana will become ill, it will suffer and it may even die because of this one simple factor.

What does he need, then? There are several key pieces of information to consider. We'll break them down for you right here.

## **Size**

Do you need lots of room? The iguana is so small, how can they even imagine needing so much room? No matter what you thought about his size or the room he needed, this is an important consideration.

First, they aren't small. In many cases, an iguana will grow up to six feet in length. That's a lot of iguana for you to provide shelter for. There is one misconception out there about this, though. Many think that if they limit the room that they provide to their iguana that they will be safely protecting it from getting extremely large. This is not true. He will continue to grow.

Iguanas start growing at a faster rate then they will down the road. But, he will grow his entire life.

Within your first year of owning him, your iguana will likely grow out of the 55 gallon aquarium that you bought it. For this consideration alone you should carefully decide on whether this is the right pet for you. Space is necessary for the animal.

The animal will need enough room to roam, not to just sit still. While they grow you can expand their habitat to make it larger to fit the iguana but you must take into consideration this often, as they will continue to grow throughout their lifetime, even as they are older.

The rule of thumb is that your iguana's habitat should be at least twice the length of the animal and it should be taller. The taller it is the better. The minimum size for a habitat is that of six feet. It is minimum because this animal is likely to continue to grow. Without enough room, he will suffer needlessly.

Without the right size cage, your pet will suffer. He may injury himself just moving around. He will be stressed, which can cause him to be less friendly to you. Those that limit the iguana's ability to move will cause his muscles to become weakened. If you don't have this type of room to provide to your pet, don't make his suffer at your expense. You should consider a pet that is smaller.

One way to know what the proper size of the habitat for your pet should be is to notice any injuries that he may have. Those that have been rubbing their noses on the glass or the doors will have burn marks or injuries there. You may see broken claws too which means he was likely scratching and looking for a way out.

In addition, these wounds are an indication that he or she is not getting enough exercise in climbing. This is especially true of an animal that has weakened muscles. Monitor the size of your iguana to the size of his cage.

Monitor the growth of your baby iguana. When you start to notice the he is about 1/3 of the length of his habitat, you'll want to consider replacing it with something larger. But, it may be more cost effective if you instead provide a large enough habitat for your iguana from the beginning.

Nevertheless, during the first months of his life, a large sized aquarium is big enough for his needs. But, he will outgrow this within that first year. In addition, realize that your iguana will be fully grown within two and a half to three years time! Make sure you are planning ahead for when that next need arises.

## **The Lighting**



Another important area of the care of your iguana is that of the lighting. The lighting plays an important role in the care of your pet. You'll need to carefully monitor the amount of light he gets. But, let's spell out just what is needed here.

### **UVA and UVB:**

These are the two most important considerations for the lighting of your iguana. He needs both of them.

**UVA:** This light will be responsible for stimulating the natural behaviors of the pet. This happens because it is a natural part of what makes up natural sunlight.

**UVB:** This type of lighting is also important. Without UVB, your pet will not be able to make vitamin D3. He also won't be able to metabolize calcium. This will leave him weak and prone to injury.

Lighting is important for a number of reasons, but first of all because of their health. Without the right type of UV lighting, your iguana is likely to suffer from a condition called Metabolic Bone Disease or MBD. During this condition, your iguana will suffer in a number of ways such as with jaw and bone deformities, weakened bones as well as an early death. Unfortunately, it is common among iguanas that are kept in captivity.

## **So, how do you get this?**

Of course, the best choice would be to be in the right climate and allow the sun to provide it. But, that's not always possible. But, just because you can't get the temperature right, it is still excellent to allow your iguana to get in the natural beams of sunlight anyway. So, the best thing for you to do is to provide your iguana with as much natural sunlight as possible.

Yet, this isn't that easy. You see, window panes and even plastic will filter out the UV light that is coming in from the sun. Therefore, although you are allowing him to bask in the sun, he's not getting the UV light he needs in this manner.

## **Here's the plan, then:**

Give your iguana as much natural sunlight as possible, without any type of filter between him and the sun. This should be a daily event for him.

Then, give him additional, artificial light in addition to the natural light. One without the other isn't nearly as good for your pet unless he gets a lot of sunlight without filters.

You will find UV light bulbs available to you at most pet stores, especially those that sell reptile products.

In the next chapters, we'll talk more about the lighting options that you have and how to carefully set up your habitat with it.

## **Temperature**

Another very important element to your iguana care is his temperature. Actual, the habitat's temperature is important to monitor. Again, in later chapters we'll provide you with some additional resources to help you to get the temperature right, but there are some things that must be mentioned early on.

First off, realize just what your iguana is. He is cold blooded. That means that his body does not produce heat like yours does and that means you have to provide it for him through his enclosure.

One spot within your iguana's habitat should be maintained at 90 degrees or higher F. This will be called his basking spot, where he can go to really soak up the heat. The surrounding air within the habitat can not drop below 80 degrees F.

Why does the temperature of the habitat matter so much? What if it falls off by a few degrees? So what? The problem with this is that the iguana depends on the right

temperature to do much of its life functions. For example, without the right level of heat, the iguana can't digest his food the right way and absorb the nutrients from it.

Without the right light, your pet will not be able to grow correctly. He or she will likely be suffering from malnutrition. He is likely not to move around much and will remain inactive. That's because he is uncomfortable and unhappy. He's suffering.

But, you don't want the habitat to maintain the same amount of heat all of the time. Providing areas that fluctuate to some level within the habitat is necessary as it will allow him to decide how to regulate his temperature.

Finally, before we move on, you also should realize that the heat that you give your iguana must not be attached to the light source. Just like you need a day and night; so does he. Heat and light are two different things that your iguana must have.

## **Humidity**

The third ingredient that must be maintained within your iguana's habitat is humidity.

Along with the light and the heat of the iguana's needs, he also requires a high level of humidity. Humidity is necessary because it keeps the iguana from dehydrating. Unlike other animals, your iguana is not likely to drink all that much. Instead, he will count on the humidity in the air to provide him with the fluids he needs.

Unfortunately, the common habitat for the iguana is almost always too dry. This can cause your iguana to be mildly dehydrated at best. Even if you provide water for your iguana to drink, he probably won't do it.

When you don't provide enough humidity for your animal, you will find that his kidneys end up struggling. Many will suffer from kidney failure. In addition to this, humidity is needed to help your iguana to shed his skin as it loosens.

How high do you need to maintain it? The humidity in your iguana's habitat should be kept at least 65 percent but better if it is at 75 percent. Again, we'll talk more about how to do this in the next chapters.

What you should get from these beginning notes is simple: if you can't provide for these levels of basic care for your iguana, you shouldn't bring him home.

In addition to these features, your habitat must provide so many more things.

You'll need to be able to provide him with things to crawl and climb on. He'll need food sources, too. What's more, you'll want to determine if you'll add a second iguana, or if you will provide him with an outside sunning room.

But, before we get into these things, the next chapter will help you to make the first decision you need to make. That is, should you build or buy your iguana's habitat. In either case, you'll need to know what to look for or build and what qualities your habitat needs to have.

Later, we'll cover the specifics of other care procedures you'll need to follow. What you should know is that the habitat that you construct for your pet is one of the most important elements for caring for him. That's why we've dedicated so much to this.

Without a proper habitat, your pet can not maintain the necessary health.

## **Chapter 2: Planning Your Habitat**

The habitat that you create for your iguana should be carefully designed and built to provide your pet with a healthy living environment. If you do not provide a high level of attention to this part of the process, you can't provide the proper care for your pet that he or she deserves and needs.

One thing that can't be stressed enough is the need to educate yourself before purchasing your habitat for your iguana. Since this is so important of a decision, you don't want to make costly mistakes. The fact is that most people purchase a habitat only to determine that they should have purchased something else. The best lesson to learn, then, is to keep learning!

### **Buying Or Building?**

You can build your habitat. There is no doubt that this is a great way to go. Or, you can buy a pre-made habitat for your pet. Take that one step further and you can have someone else make a habitat for you and then buy it from them. In any case, what you have to determine is the correct way to build or buy one.

The largest drawback of purchasing your own, pre-made habitat is cost. They are by far expensive homes to purchase for your pet. Sometimes, they are well designed to provide for most of the iguana's needs. But, most of the time, they aren't. In fact, most of what you will find in your local pet store is far too small for your iguana. Sure, it's a great habitat until they grow to their full adult size!

There are a number of great locations online that can help you to design your own custom made iguana habitat. Purchasing one is not a bad idea, but it will have to be done with a full understanding of what you need that habitat to provide for your pet. Don't underestimate the size of your iguana!

If you purchase a habitat for your iguana, get a habitat, not a cage. Look at the unit.

- Does it provide for enough room for your full grown iguana?
- Does it provide for enough room so that your iguana can crawl, climb and move comfortably?
- Or, if the habitat is small, will it be a permanent or temporary home for him? You'll need to replace it if you do purchase smaller units.



Sometimes, people allow their iguana's to be free roaming. That means that he doesn't stay in his habitat all of the time. When this is the case, you may want to purchase a smaller habitat. Still, the iguana needs to be able to move around within it and still be able to climb to his basking place.

In most cases, though, a habitat is necessary for full time occupation. For that reason, we recommend that you invest the time now in purchasing a large, comfortable and well designed iguana habitat before you purchase anything else. If you purchase a cage for \$100 you'll have to replace it. Over and over again, you'll end up paying the same amount if not more and get all the headaches that come with adjusting your pet to their new cage.

In other words, just go the easy route now, spend a little more money now and don't worry about it!

Another important note to mention is that more than likely, you won't be able to find a habitat that is large enough for an adult iguana, as we've described here. Most that are located in pet stores do not take into consideration the size of a full grow iguana and therefore just don't provide them in the proper size.

For that reason, we recommend that you build your own habitat or have someone custom build one for you. Don't worry; it's a lot less expensive!

A pre-made habitat can cost you thousands of dollars if it is well designed and well set up. What's more is that you will have limited size and color choices available. But, if you purchase your own raw materials and do the building yourself, you'll find the process to be much more suitable to both your wallet and your specific needs in size, color, materials and more.

## **Planning To Build Your Habitat**

Now, there are many things you'll need to think about in the design of your habitat. Here's a brief look at some of them. What we suggest is that you do further research on the topic of building your own iguana habitat. You'll want to see examples of the actual habitats you can select from. This is a great way to get some ideas to choose from for your own design.

## **Location, Location, Location**

The first thing that you'll need to consider before you determine what to build is where you'll put it. In many cases, you'll be able to design a habitat that fits well with the location in which you will place it.

If you think you'll ever move or want to move the habitat, you should consider building a habitat that can be easily moved. That's not too hard, because many people build habitats in sections that can then be added onto.

For example, you can start with a large aquarium sized unit and then build on top of it, safely to create a larger habitat as you go.

In any case, find the location within your home that is going to be his new home. Determine what you would like the habitat to look like, too. Determine just how much room you can give up to your iguana. The more the better, but don't let it take over your home, either. At this point, you'll need to determine the size of the iguana habitat you'll be building.

## **Materials**

Obviously, the first question you have is what should you make the habitat out of. There are several options available to you in this regard, actually. Here are some possibilities for you to take into consideration.

1. Glass: Glass is a good choice because it provides for keeping the heat and humidity within the habitat. The problem is that it can break, it's also quite heavy and

can cost you a good amount. In most cases, individuals will only use this as part of their actual habitat.

2. Plywood/Woods: Plywood is good because it is inexpensive and its light weight to move later. But, it doesn't look that great. Other woods such as oak are good choices too, but they are going to cost you more.
3. Plexiglas: This is another option that's okay. Its light weight and it is affordable. In most cases, it works well for keeping the heat and humidity in the habitat. The problem is that it doesn't provide for ventilation and it will be scratched up easily.

These are only three of your choices. You can also consider hardware cloth or InterNet mesh if you like both with benefits. In most cases, though, you'll want to combine the options that you have. For most, the goal will be to see their pet in his habitat, so you want something that provides a view.

Take into consideration how you will keep the heat and humidity needed in the habitat. It also requires some way to vent it. That's hard to do, but with the combination of these materials, you can accomplish it and do so in a great way!

When planning on the materials to use for your iguana habitat, you'll want to pay attention to the actual needs you have in as far as free roaming goes. Think about these things. First, if you want your pet to have some ability to be free roaming, you'll need to provide for that. Second, even if you do want it to roam, you still need to design an effective set up that will keep it from escaping.

Even if free roaming is okay, you still need to have a way to keep him within the actual habitat in case you need him to be. A removable door is a good option here.

## **Venting Your Habitat**

Once you've selected the materials for your habitat, the next thing you'll need to pay attention to is that of venting it. Ventilation is important for any living animal, as you can imagine. If you place it in the right location, you are sure to keep your heat and humidity in, and allow for good air circulation at the same time.

When venting your habitat, don't place large vents at the top of your habitat because this will allow for too much heat to escape. You also don't want to have large areas of venting because this causes drafts which also make it harder to maintain the right heat within the habitat. Even still, you need to maintain the humidity and heat without having to have your home at these extreme temperatures.

Venting locations can be placed in a number of locations. In fact, you should place several in specific areas for optimal ventilation for your iguana.

First, place a small one near the top. You don't want to allow a lot of heat to escape, but some venting in this area is important nevertheless. Next, you'll want another one located under the main basking area within the habitat. Remember, this is going to be the location in which your iguana can rest and just bask in the heat.

For the largest ventilation area, head towards the bottom. You really want to keep it near the bottom to allow minimal heat loss but to provide a good amount of ventilation at this point. The reason for this positioning is simple.

Heat rises. Depending on where exactly you place your heating source, you'll want the air to be pulled upward as it naturally will. Then, it can go out towards the first vent which is located under your basking point, or go up and out the top. Without the top vent there, you'll have a pocket of heated air that can become stagnate.

Getting your ventilation is the next step. One of the best ways to do this is to use a vent that is made for venting. Use heating vent covers, for example. This way, you can adjust the amount of ventilation that you want. You can put in more vents than you need and then adjust them later.

When you buy these, insure that the edges are kept rounded as not to harm the iguana.

You can also vent your habitat with other, simpler means. For example, you can drill holes the size of no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in diameter through the areas that you will position. Or, cut out an area and attach hardware cloth over the top of it.

You can make your vents any way that you want to. The goal is to provide you with the most flexibility when it comes to venting the habitat. Remember, putting more into the design and construction is fine as long as you have a way to close or open them as needed.

One final note, make sure that however you install the vents to do so in such a way as a climbing iguana won't be able to actually open or close the vent.

## **Safety Is Essential**

With everything that you do with your habitat, it is extremely important for you to think about safety. Not only do you need to think about this in the way of your iguana but also with your home. Heating elements can cause extreme problems for potential fires if constructed the wrong way. Or, you may even find that too much humidity in your home can cause mold growth.

Another consideration is to monitor where you will position the heating sources and light bulbs. Since iguanas can jump large areas, you don't want them to jump on or at these sources as they can be hurt or even cause a fire.

In any case when you are using electrical wiring, you should consider having a professional help you. Even with the carpentry work that has to be done it can be quite helpful and safe to call on a professional to provide that help to you. Without their help, you have the potential of causing a real problem and harming yourself or your home.

## **Seeing Your Pet**

If you construct your habitat of nothing but wood, you won't be able to see your iguana enjoying his home. Being able to see your pet is just as important as him being able to see out.

For most, creating a front wall of Plexiglas is the way to go. Others like to cover part of the front of their habitat with hardware cloth. That will allow for excellent viewing. You can also consider using tempered glass but try to avoid using standard glass. If it falls and breaks, it is going to shatter into millions of pieces, causing harm to you and to your iguana in the process.



Now, iguanas will also need a place to retreat to that isn't so visible to everyone that walks by. For most, the easiest way to do this is to design walking areas or boxes within the habitat that create a partially hidden area.

This is important because it will allow for a bit of a place for your iguana to go and hide but not so much so that you can't find him.

## **Provide A Way To Clean Up**

When reality strikes, you'll realize that you have to be able to actually clean your iguana habitat too. This can be tricky, if you didn't think about it when designing your habitat in the first place. For most, it is also important to take your iguana out of the habitat every now and then. These things must be thought about when creating a habitat for your iguana.

So, how do you do that? The best way to create an easy way for you to clean and get in and out of your iguana habitat is to build in a door. A door on the side or even on the front of your habitat is the perfect way to get in and out safely. Even a sliding door will work if there is enough room for it. Remember, with the size of your iguana's habitat, building a door into one side of it shouldn't be that hard to actually do.

## What' Else?

Does it sound like there is a lot to plan on when it comes to your iguana habitat? There is, but remember that this is a one time thing. Once you have your iguana habitat built, if you've built one large enough, you won't have to worry about doing it again.

There are other things you'll want to think about too. Design your habitat with other things too.

- **Basking area:** A place where the heat level is higher so that your iguana can come to this location, lay down and relax.
- **Heating units:** We'll discuss this in the next chapters more in detail.
- **Lighting units:** This too will be discussed fuller in later chapters.
- **Climbing areas:** Your iguana will need several ways to climb around in the habitat. Depending on his size, you'll need to provide for this.
- **Feeding Area:** There needs to be an area that can be easy for him to get to. Don't place it on the floor of the

habitat. It also shouldn't be right by the heat source as this won't be comfortable for him.

- **Water area:** You'll need two places for water. One needs to be placed at the basking area of your habitat and the other should be placed near the food.
- **Bath area:** Your iguana also needs an area where he can soak in water.
- **Shaded area:** For hiding and for sleeping should be located someplace.

You need to maintain the right control of the heating elements within your iguana's habitat in order to provide for a location for him to move from one hotter area to a cooler one (Within temperature limits provided, of course!)

## **Getting Yourself Started**

All of this does seem overwhelming but it really doesn't have to be. Take the time now to sit down with a piece of paper and a pencil and get to work. Draw out the plans for your iguana's habitat. Take into considerations any budget concerns you have. Take the time necessary to map out a plan for success.

We've helped to make it easy by providing you with much of what you need to build a good habitat. Now, make it your own.

You'll want to design with these elements in mind, but remember that it can be anything that you want it to be. Stain the wood to of the habitat to match the wood within the room of your home that the habitat will be located. Or, add decorative plants within the habitat that will add character and beauty to the area. Just make sure that your iguana doesn't munch on them!

There are many different examples of iguana habitats available online. Take some time to look at the various types that have been designed by others. You don't have to use their specific set up but that will give you some ideas of what you could do or how you can accomplish various things that you're after.

Now that you have a good start on the construction of the habitat of the iguana, we'll get started on how to properly care for him. With your design, you'll need to take into consideration the heating, lighting and the humidity needed for your iguana. So, make sure you read through those chapters before starting to build.

## **Chapter 3: Heating And Lighting Your Iguana's Habitat**

Now, its time to think about the heating and lighting within your iguana's habitat. Even if you purchase a pre made habitat, you'll still need to find ways to keep him warm enough and to keep him getting the necessary light he needs.

### **Heating**

The heating in your iguana's habitat is quite important to the well being of your iguana. There are many considerations to think about here, though. The good news is that this chapter will tell you all you need to know about the heat sources and needs of your iguana.

### **Why They Need Heat**

The first consideration that you have is just why the iguana needs heat and what that level is. We've already mentioned that providing heat to your iguana is required to maintain its health.

Within your habitat, you'll need to provide a location that can provide basking heat to your iguana. Generally, this area should be able to get to the middle 90's in temperature. (All temperatures in this e-book are listed in Fahrenheit.) The rest of the air within the habitat should be maintained no less than 75 degrees, but better if it is closer to 80. The final need is to offer a range of temperatures within the habitat to allow him to move around as he feels comfortable.

Now, to accomplish this, there are several things you should and shouldn't do.

First, purchase several attachment thermometers. Place these in various area of the habitat so that they can be easily read by you from outside the enclosure.

Next, don't bother with over priced basking light bulbs that are commonly sold to you at the local pet shops. This is simply unnecessary and a waste of your money. Instead, use incandescent light bulbs. Yes, the ordinary, every day kind!

These bulbs work great because they can accomplish two of your important considerations. That of course is heat and light. They are also quite inexpensive!

To determine the right wattage for those light bulbs, you'll have to do a bit of searching. The wattage is your control measure for your habitat. But, please don't guess at the temperature. Allow the well placed thermometers give you a good reading of what the actual temperature in that area is.

You can adjust the amount of heat in an area with a lower wattage of light bulb. You will have to play around with this for a few days before you bring your iguana home until you get the right conditions set up. The wattage will also depend on the size and ventilation of your habitat, too.

One trick for those more difficult areas is to use a dimmer switch. Simply install these on the light bulbs and use them to make changes to your habitat when the temperature gets too hot or too cold. It's a great, easy way to monitor the temperatures, too.

## **Basking In The Light Bulb**

You'll also need to install a specific type of light bulb for the basking area of your habitat. No, you won't have to spend a small fortune on those light bulbs from the pet store.

Instead, install a hooded clamp fixture in your habitat. You can find various sizes and choices in wattage available to help you to get the right heat.

In most cases, you'll want to look for a fixture that has a ceramic socket to it. This will help you to avoid fire situations!

When using these types of lighting fixtures, you have to monitor their locations. You don't want the iguana to be able to touch them or jump on top of them. They will end up with burns because of this.

One way to prevent this is to keep the bulbs out of the actual habitat. That can be hard to do in some instances, though. Instead, use a bulb guard, which is a simple wire meshing that would cover the actual bulb so that it can not easily be touched.

Now that you have the day time heating covered, you'll need to tackle the night time needs that you have.

In iguana's natural habitat, heat is necessary all day and most of the night. But, there is the need to drop the temperature on them at this point too. For iguana's lighting times are key. The best amount of lighting for them is to provide for twelve or thirteen hours of darkness. That means turning their lights off for that amount of time.

Now, it's not just because an iguana should be sleeping, but without this type of lights off time, your iguana won't be able to maintain its proper behaviors. He may not eat at the



right times, he may have problems with problems with aggression and even may have problems with passing stool. Just let them get at least twelve hours with the lights off and this will help.

To accomplish this, use a timer. You can purchase those that can be programmed to handle this type of cycle. Set it to either 12 on and 12 off, or you can use 13 off and 11 on.

The question is, then, how do you manage to actually keep the heat up in the habitat for your iguana's safety with the lights off?

Actually, there is a great remedy for this problem. At night time, you can allow the temperature to drop but not lower to that of 75 degrees. To keep it regulate at that number or above, use Ceramic Heat Emitters. These can be found in most hardware stores and are sometimes called CHE.

To use them, place them throughout the habitat as you did with the other lighting fixtures that you've placed. They fit right into a standard incandescent light bulb socket, just like the others are using. Now, there are two options for you to choose from.

1. Have separate timers for both units. That means that when the day lights go out for the night, your CHE's should come on to maintain the temperature.

2. Have the CHE's on all of the time at a low wattage in addition to the other lighting fixtures that you are using. This way, no timer is needed.

In any case, you'll want to monitor the temperatures during the night time hours just as you would for the day time hours.

When using these lighting fixtures, make sure that you monitor how you are doing so. No lighting fixture should be exposed to allow the iguana to touch it. In addition, you don't want the iguana to be hurt by shattering of these bulbs. But, it is also important to monitor the location of the light bulbs to keep them from catching fire.

No light bulbs should be placed near anything flammable, including your habitat's structure if made of wood or any type of fabric you may use within the habitat. Also, only place CHE's into ceramic fixtures (porcelain works fine, too) as they can start a fire with how hot they can get when left on.

Monitor the electrical set up you are using. Don't plug too much into outlets and be aware of any electrical cords that may have frays on them. Working with a professional, licensed electrician is probably one of the best decisions you

can make when it comes to monitoring your pet's habitat temperatures and lighting needs.

## **Other Options**

There are other options that you can take advantage of. For example, if you visit your heat supply stores, you'll find a number of excellent supplies which may include heat panels, heat tape and even pig blankets. If you decide to go with other sources of heat for night time heat, make sure that you realize that the unit will need to be turned on all night long and that it will be running unattended during that time.

If the option is a safe source of heat for this period of time, and the animal can't be hurt by touching it, then it could be a good choice.

A word of warning, though about heating sources. Don't use heating pads that are designed for people. These heating pads may work but they are also a severe fire hazard for your home when left unattended. You should instead consider using other methods.

Another mistake to avoid is the use of hot rocks. You may even find these in your pet store, but avoid them. They are just too easily designed to burn your pet. Unfortunately, they just are not reliable and can easily burn your iguana with just a touch of his foot.

## **Lighting**

Just as important as heating, the right lighting is necessary to keep your pet healthy and happy. In fact, if you don't give them enough light, they are likely to become ill, perish too early or they may become ill tempered and unfriendly to your touch.

We mentioned earlier the needs that the iguana has for UVA and UVB light. Each one plays a role in the health and well being of your pet. But, they don't have to be hard to provide to him. In fact, it can be pretty simple to give him what he needs.

### **UVA**

The first type of lighting your iguana needs is that of UVA. This is the same type of light that you use. Your body uses UVA just the same. It makes us feel good and gives us a sense of well being. We need it to feel good and so does your iguana.

This is probably the easiest of the things to provide to your pet. All you need to do to provide UVA lighting to your iguana is leave the lights on. For example, UVA light can come from the room that you place your pet in. The

standard lights that you use will provide the necessary light source to your iguana, too.

That's really all there is to providing UVA light. In fact, a well set up iguana habitat will take care of this for you simply by allowing you to see your iguana. This window or other visual tool that you use will let light in too, which is all that is required.

## **UVB**

UVB light is more difficult to provide. But, if you plan to have an iguana, you have to have this type of lighting source, too. The fact is that you need to understand what UVB does for the iguana and also how to provide the right amount of it to your pet.

## **Why You Need It**

First off, your iguana will depend on the source of UVB that it gets to help it to synthesize Vitamin D. Without Vitamin D, they can't take in and use the calcium they get. In fact, their bodies turn against them and will get the calcium from their bone structure when it doesn't get enough or can't use enough in other means.

When that happens, your pet iguana will not be able to actually maintain his health. The bone structure can

become weakened. What's worse is that he will likely suffer from one or more illnesses including malnutrition. The end result is a sick iguana that will die before he should have.

## **Getting UVB From The Sun**

The very best way to get this source of UVB is directly from the sun. That sounds easy, but there are several things you have to keep in mind when you consider this method of providing UVB.

First, just putting your pet near a window is not nearly enough. The glass of the window pane will filter out most of the UVB lighting. In addition, opening the window isn't enough either, because mesh screens or any type of blocking between your iguana and the sun is going to filter out too much of the all important UVB lighting.

But, you can create a second habitat, a sun basking habitat outdoors if you like. If you decide to do this route, you'll need to make sure it is done carefully. For most, this will allow you to place your pet outdoors for a few hours to absorb the right amount of UVB lighting.

But, remember these things when building or placing your pet in an outdoor sun basking location.

## Things To Remember:

- The outdoor temperature should be no longer than 80 degrees. Anything lower is not safe for your iguana to be exposed to.
- Don't allow the iguana to be exposed to more than 100 degrees of heat, either.
- Insure that there is no possibility of anything getting into your pet's habitat to hurt them or that he can in some way find a way out. Unfortunately, birds and other animals will use him for dinner if you allow it. In addition, most iguanas that get out just once are never found again.
- Provide supervision to the iguana any time that he is outdoors.
- Water is mandatory for your pet when outdoors. He can lose a lot of fluids basking in the sun. So, provide a cup full of clean water for him to drink from.
- You must also provide him with an area that is shaded that he can hide in when you feels the need. Most iguanas will move in and out of the light as they need to.

The good news is that your pet only needs about an hour a day of this type of UVB light to fill its needs. As long as it is direct lighting, your pet will be set. Don't forget to provide this lighting, though.

### **UVB: Indoors**

Unfortunately, it is not often possible for a daily bask in 80 degree weather for your pet (although you can build a habitat that provides efficient heat too.) In most cases, though, you'll have to provide some source of UV bulbs for your pet to take advantage of indoors.

The best way to provide this is through the habitat's basking area. The lighting source that you use there can be used for UVB light needs. In fact, it is nearly a must for you to take into consideration.

But, you'll have to do some homework. The problem with most of the UVB lighting bulbs that you will find in your area pet store is they are not suitable for your iguana. Don't be fooled into believing they are even when they claim to be basking lights.

The problem is that they don't often provide enough UVB or they only provide it for a limited time. How long and how



much UVB they provide is what is in question. With your pet's life at stake, you don't want to make a guess here.

Instead, look for these two types:

- Fluorescent tubes
- Mercury Vapor Lamps

You'll find these offered throughout the web and they are by far the best source of UVB light for your pets. These are both great choices to consider, but you'll have to make your decision. Let's quickly break it down for you so that you can make a better decision.

## **Fluorescent**

Fluorescent tubing lights are easy to find. But, don't think they are all the same. In fact, those that are called full spectrum which you would possibly use to grow plants are not going to provide enough UV for your pet. Instead, a great choice is that of ZooMed Iguana Light 5.0. This is a great choice and has been used in several studies with excellent success rates.

If you decide to use fluorescent tubes, you still have to do a bit of work. First, make sure to purchase those that are made specific for reptiles. Second, place the bulbs no more than eight inches from where the pet will be basking.

Anything more than that and he can't get the UV wavelengths that he needs.

Replace your UV fluorescent tubing at least every six to nine months. Even if they are still working at this point, they've lost all of their ability to give off UV lighting and are a waste to you. You may need more than one light to provide the right amount of light to your pet. In order to know this, use a Solarmeter 6.2 Spectral radiometer to help you to test the amount of output that you are getting.

Finally, don't place anything between light bulb and the iguana.

## **Mercury Vapor**

The other option that you can use is that of mercury vapor lamps. These are going to provide you with the UV that you need but at a higher price, generally. But, the technology used in these lamps has improved and continues to do so. In fact, some are almost as good as fluorescent tubes. You'll want to select only internally ballasted bulbs, though. These will also provide you with a heating source for your iguana. Be careful, though, as they can fail you because of the excess amounts of heat used in them.

When using mercury vapor lamps, you'll want to really pay attention to how you use them. Follow the directions

provided for their use carefully. You'll also want to monitor just how warm they will make the habitat and adjust your other heating sources accordingly to keep the proper level of heat within the habitat at all times.

As a human, you shouldn't be overexposed to mercury vapor lamps because of the amounts of UV light that they do produce. Finally, make sure that nothing goes between your iguana and your lighting source.

Providing enough heat and light to your iguana should be your main goal. Before you even bring your iguana home, you should have his habitat set up to this degree of care. Then, monitor it at several times per day and per night to insure that it has the right amounts of protection for your pet. You shouldn't assume that a set up that we've described is enough. Instead, you need to find out what it will be with use of your testing supplies and your thermometer.

Since the size of your habitat and the elements within it will vary so much from the next person's, you'll have to take measurements on your own to determine the safety of the environment.

## **Chapter 4: Maintaining Humidity For Your Iguana's Habitat**

Now that you have your habitat built and set up with the right amounts of heat and light, the next part of the three part equation for your iguana is that of humidity.

Humidity is the amount of moisture that is in the air. Since iguanas come from areas that are generally very high in humidity all the time, you'll need to mimic that here in your habitat. But, how in the world do you create the right amount of humidity?

The right level of humidity for your iguana will be between 65 percent and 75 percent, which are fairly humid conditions. There are several ways for you to get this high of a humidity level within your habitat.

First, there are the simple methods to doing this. You can just spray the habitat down with water throughout the day. Don't spray less than an hour before the lights go out for the night though. You can also place large containers of water in the habitat, which will help to make for the right amount of humidity within the habitat, too.

In the later chapters, you'll learn about how you need to bath and mist your iguana, but for now, realize that is a good way to gain the benefits of added moisture, too.

If you built your iguana's habitat correctly, the heat and humidity levels will remain high enough with these methods as you'll have a pretty decent way of keeping it in (Plexiglas is a great option for this.) But, it may not be enough.

You see, one of the largest problems with iguana's in captivity is that of maintaining the right amounts of moisture in their bodies. They just don't drink lots water on their own and for that reason they need to absorb it from the air around them.

For this reason, a better system of providing for humidity in the habitat should be considered. You can do this by purchasing a misting system. Another option is that of an ultrasonic fogger. These work on timers that will mist the entire habitat several times per day to provide for the right amount of humidity for your pet.

### **Don't Over Do It**

The hardest part of the project will be not overdoing it. You see, with too much moisture within your iguana's habitat, you are putting him at risk, too. Sounds like a trick? The fact is that too much mist will allow for problems.

For example, your iguana's habitat needs to be cleaned properly. If you provide for too high of a level of humidity within the habitat, you'll be encouraging bacteria and even mold to grow there. Mold that is growing on the habitat in any location or that is growing on your iguana itself is a sign that too much moisture is in the habitat and you need to lower it.

Since these things can make your iguana ill, it pays to take the time necessary to monitor the levels of humidity within your iguana's habitat. To do that, look for tools at your local pet store, or better yet right online. You want to have some methods that can provide the right amount of humidity to your iguana, but maintaining a high level of humidity is not okay either.

Now that you've covered the three important elements of taking care of your iguana, we'll move into more every day considerations you'll need to pay attention to. If you have questions about the construction and set up of your iguana's habitat, you'll find plenty of resources around the web to help you.

## **Chapter 5: What Goes Into My Habitat?**

You've designed an amazing habitat, but there is still a few things you'll need to take into consideration beyond just the construction and the environmental issues.

What will you put into your habitat? You should pay some attention to the details of this area of your habitat. We well provided for iguana that has all he needs in a clean and organized habitat is a long living, healthy and happy pet. Now, here are several things that you'll build or add to your habitat.

### **Flooring Covering**

Now, when it comes to your habitat's flooring, take this consideration closely. You want to have something that is easy to replace or at least to clean. But, you don't want to have anything that your iguana can pick up with his tongue or even worse get wrapped around his toes.

You'll find many materials available in the pet stores but don't waste your time on them. Instead consider other easier to afford materials. Here are some options you have.

Floors of:

- Newspaper, ensure that it does not have any type of toxic ink on it.
- Paper towels work just fine, too.
- Plain papers without any type of toxins in them.
- Indoor/outdoor carpeting.

The carpeting is a great choice but if you purchase it, make sure it has nothing that can get caught on your iguana's toes. You'll want to wrap it around the edges and tape them underneath to keep them from being torn up or getting caught on his tongue.

In addition, whatever you use, keep extra on hand so that you can easily clean up any messes that happen to be made by your iguana.

There are several things you don't want to use in this environment. For example, anything that is made of particles like wood chips or even sand. Don't use these as they'll cause numerous problems for your iguana when he uses his tongue flick to get a taste of what's happening around him.



One probably that you may run into with any of the listed options for floor coverings is that water can pass through these and get onto the wood below. If the wood gets too wet or stays wet for a long period of time, mold growth or warping can happen.

The best way to avoid this is to purchase a piece of vinyl sheeting to place over the bottom of the wood and then you can place whatever materials you've selected over the top. This will help to keep the underneath completely easy to maintain. Just a wipe and its clean. Make sure that it is properly secured to the bottom, with nothing that can injure your iguana.

## **Climbing Fun!**

Any habitat is not complete without some excellent climbing and basking areas for your iguana. He will want to move around and have something to do.

As for what you should provide or how you should make these structures; that's up to you. You'll want them to be wide enough to hold your large, fully grown iguana. Instead of using branches, though, purchase planks of wood and then cover them completely with the same materials you've covered your flooring with. Some of the best material to do this with is indoor/outdoor carpeting.

You'll want to cover the entire board and the climbing structures with this carpeting. This will give them their necessary grip to grab onto their structure to move around.

You'll want to completely wrap the board with the carpeting and then secure it. Don't leave anything to be exposed as this can cause tears and injury to your iguana. Again, just like the flooring, cover the wood with vinyl sheets that can be wiped down. Then, wrap in the carpeting. You'll have to remove the carpeting and clean regularly so make sure it's easy to do this.

### **Food Locations**

Within your habitat, you'll need to put in your food and water bowls. They must be sturdy otherwise your pet will knock them over. In addition, don't allow them to be too tall for your guy to reach in and take a drink.

### **Water Bin**

In addition to providing a bowl for food and water, you'll want to include a container that your iguana can get into and out of easily so that he or she can have a nice soak. Fill it just slightly with water as a small amount of water can cause your iguana to drown. In addition, make sure that as he is climbing in and out, the container is not going to tip on him.

You'll have to monitor his use of this soaking tub for a while, especially when he is younger as they often struggle with water and can drown. In addition, they love to use it for a bathroom! So, make sure you monitor and clean this tub often. Don't skip it though as they need it to help them to shed their skin.

## **Hiding Spots**

Another area to provide for your iguana within their habitat is that of a hiding place. They really like to get away and hide from view for a bit during each day. You can purchase or build your own hiding structures, which is especially important for younger iguanas.

As they get older, though, your iguana won't need an entire box to hide in. Instead, he's more interested in having a location that may be just a bit out of the way, such as an area that may have an obstructed view by design of the climbing structures.

In the next chapter, learn about your day to day needs of caring for your iguana.

## **Chapter 6: Taking Care Of Your Iguana Correctly**

There are many aspects of caring for your iguana that you still need to take into consideration, even after building your habitat. Let's break them down here.

### **Feeding Them**

Iguanas are very delicate animals and part of that comes from their dietary needs. But, it will be up to you to determine what the right foods for your iguana are based on his tastes and your needs. But, we'll break it down for you too.

Don't be fooled by myths. Iguanas eat plants, not any type of insect or animal. If they do ingest this it is only by accident. They are herbivores! Don't make the mistake of feeding your iguana any type of animal protein.

As for what you should do, there are several things you'll need to take into consideration. First, anything that you give your pet should be clean, healthy and sterile. Fresh food and water is a must for you and so is it for them. You'll have an unhealthy living environment with a sick iguana if you allow them to drink dirty water.

You should feed your iguana daily. Give him clean water several times per day, too. Although you may hear that you don't have to do this, it is imperative to provide your pet with fresh food daily and allow him to eat as much as he wants.

Don't worry about over feeding them. They can't be overfed. But, how much; give them food and let them eat. You'll soon be able to tell just how much is too much and how much he wants. As he gets bigger, his appetite will grow, too. Feed him in the morning, after he's waken for the best, all day temperature aided digestion he needs.

Water is a funny thing with iguanas. In fact, you should train them to drink more water. To do this, use a highly enjoyed piece of lettuce, such as collards, and place a small amount of it in their water bowl. When he eats it, he'll take in water too. Soon, make the piece smaller and smaller until he is coming to the bowl to drink water rather than to eat the treat.

One thing that is important in feeding your iguana is the amount of calcium to phosphorus that they get. Its called the Calcium to phosphorus ratio or Ca:P. You want this ratio to be 2 to 1. Most foods are high in one but low in the other of these. Remember, a variety of foods is perfect for the

iguana so keeping this in mind, feed him a diet of variety that provides a 2 to 1 ratio in these elements.

**What to feed them.** Here's a good variety:

**Greens:** At least 40 percent of their diet should be made up of foods like turnip greens, collards, dandelion, water cress, and escarole.

**Vegetables:** Another 40 percent of their diets should provide vegetables like green beans, mushrooms, bell peppers, squashes, peas, parsnips, okra, alfalfa, sweet potatoes and carrots.

**Fruits:** Keep this to less than ten percent of their diets and it can include foods like raspberries, mango, fig, apples, bananas, papaya, or melons.

**Protein supplements:** Don't give more than five percent of this but it can come from alfalfa pellets or other commercial brands.

**Grains:** Less than five percent of their food can come from grains such as cooked rice and pasta, whole wheat breads or others.

There are other foods that should never be given to your iguana. Those include any type of insect or animal protein,

any type of dairy product, no eggs, no type of other animal pet foods, no rhubarb. Some foods can be given but only sparingly such as foods that contain citrus, lettuce leaves, or tofu.

## **Training Your Iguana**

It's important to mention some training here. That's because you'll want to be able to bring your iguana home to a nice, ready home and allow him to get acclimated to the area. There are many things you'll want to take into consideration when it comes to training your iguana. First, realize that your iguana needs time to get adjusted to his home. It may take some time!

Allow your iguana to visit his hiding place without being bothered or pulled out of it. In addition, when you do pick him up and take him out of his habitat, watch for signs of stress. If he doesn't like what you are doing, he's stressed and he fears for his life. Place him near his hiding place and leave him alone.

The process of taming your iguana will take time and patience. Use smaller sessions at first to get them used to you. One way to help provide the right level of care to your iguana is to allow him to watch you. Start out by watching him watch you from a distance and for a short amount of

time. Then, add onto this slowly until you are sitting near him and watching him.

After he's used to watching you, you can begin working with touching him. Don't pick him up yet! He's not ready for that. But, put your hand close enough to him. Don't touch his head or his tail. Touch for a second and then move away. Little by little, you'll be able to increase how long you can touch him. Don't push it because if he doesn't like being petted, it will take a lot of work to get him to allow it again.

Once your pet begins to allow you to pet him, including his head, you can begin to see that he's comfortable with you. It's advisable not to actually pick up your iguana for some time. He's just going to take a while to adjust to you. Once you've gotten to the point where he doesn't seem bothered at all by your petting, you can consider it. Never grab his tail! The tail can actually break off in order for them to escape.

By petting its underbelly, it may rise up and want to be petted there more so. When that happens, you'll be able to slowly pick him up. But, for these first few times, pick him up slowly and then put him back down. By doing this it will help to make the process easier and keep your iguana happier, longer. With lots of practice, you'll be able to pick him up for longer periods of time.



## **Chapter 7: Cleaning And Maintaining Your Iguana**

There is much to do to take care of your iguana, but you'll also want to learn how to keep it healthy. There are several things you'll need to do to provide for your iguana's health.

### **Cleanliness Of The Habitat**

First, you'll always have to maintain the level of cleanliness with your iguana. Anything that can make you ill can do serious damage to your iguana. Therefore, the feeding bowls and anything that is used with your pet should be kept clean and sanitary. That goes for his food and water bowls, which should be washed every day. If you see that there are feces or waste in his habitat, clean it up. You'll want to do this daily, too. Don't wait!

Your iguana's habitat also needs to be sanitized. That means that everything in there, including the floors, walls, climbing structure...everything, needs to be washed and disinfected every week. You can purchase cleaning supplies at your local pet shop to help you to maintain the health of your iguana's habitat.

You also have to keep you clean. After touching your iguana or anything that belongs to him or his habitat, wash your hands with antibacterial soap really well. They can spread salmonella!

## **Cleaning Your Iguana**

Yes, an iguana needs a good bath, too. To give your iguana a bath, you'll need to place it in a tub of water that is quite shallow. You can use your bathtub, but for sanitary reasons, it is better to purchase its own tub for bathing. Never bath them in the skin or anywhere where the area can come in contact with food. Everything should be sterilized before and after your iguana has a bath.

Never use any type of soap on your iguana. Keep the water warm and allowing a soft shower to run is just fine as long as not much water stays in the tub. Give them a bath as often as you can, even daily. But, at least one time per week should be done.

Allow your iguana to get a bit of time in the water. About 30 minutes will allow it to soak and enjoy itself. Never walk away from your iguana at this time. It only takes a second for them to disappear on you!

## **Your Pet's Health**

If you owned a dog, you would take him to the vet often and get his health maintained by your doctor. You need to do the same thing with your iguana. He needs to be kept healthy if he is to live a long and happy life.

In most areas, you can find a vet that will take reptiles. In many ways, this is a great way to learn more about your iguana too. Take the time to talk with a vet to make sure that they have experience with iguanas. If not, they will not know how to spot illnesses or even help you to maintain his health.

When it comes to maintaining the health of your pet, you need to make sure that he has all that he needs in cleanliness and attention. Take care of keeping his habitat clean, as this will help to avoid most instances of illness. In addition, make sure that anything that soils the habitat is cleaned quickly including food and waste.

By doing these simple things you will keep the living quarters of your pet healthy for both you and your iguana.

## Conclusion

Your iguana can and will become a part of your family if you take the time to really care for it. It does take time and patience to work towards this level, but you can do it.

An iguana's most important consideration is its habitat, which is why we've dedicated so much of this book to that feature. Getting the heat, humidity and the lighting right for your new pet will allow him to flourish within your home. Don't skimp on this part. There is nothing we can stress more than keeping your pet in an environment that is as most likely his natural habitat as possible.

In addition to these things, the most important second thing for you to do is to provide yourself with constant education on the topic of iguanas. Your vet should be a great place to start, but online you'll find many message boards and blogs written by other iguana owners. That's a great way to work out problems and to ask questions.

Iguanas are, for the most part, an animal that we don't know a whole lot about. They can do well in captivity if you've meet these considerations. If you don't plan to work hard at maintaining the healthy and living conditions of this pet, we advise you to look for another animal.

With a bit of caring and understanding, any pet owner will be able to enjoy their iguana. Take the time to learn about your pet and take the time to bond with him. When you do, his personality will come out and he'll be a joy to come home to.