

GREEN IGUANA DIET

GENERAL INFORMATION

Wash, finely chop and **thoroughly mix** all plant material. A food processor is recommended. This helps ensure a balanced diet by forcing the iguana to eat all the offered items, not just the favorite or tasty ones. Prepare enough for 4 to 7 days, store in the refrigerator, and serve at room temperature or slightly warmer.

INGREDIENTS

Each meal contains ingredients from **all five** of the following:

1. **Calcium-rich Vegetables** (30 - 40% of the diet, 2 or more items per feeding): turnip, romaine, mustard or beet greens, kale, collards, bok choy, Swiss chard, dandelions, parsley, escarole, spinach, alfalfa pellets.
2. **Other Vegetables** (30 - 40% of the diet, a variety weekly): frozen mixed vegetables, squash, zucchini, sweet potato, bell pepper, broccoli, peas, beans, okra, grated carrot, sprouts.
3. **Grain/Fiber** (optional, up to 20% of the diet): whole grain bread and natural bran cereals.
4. **Fruits** (no more than 15% of the diet): fig, papaya, melon, apple, peach, plum, strawberry, tomato, banana with skin, grapes, kiwi.
5. **Vitamin/Mineral Supplements** (Nekton-Rep is recommended) mixed with powdered calcium carbonate (cuttlebone shavings) or calcium gluconate. Mix 1 part vitamins to 2 parts mineral (calcium). (Tums® can also be used as a calcium source.) Hatchlings and juveniles get 1 small pinch per feeding; adults get 1 full pinch per 2 pounds weight twice weekly; adult females get 1 full pinch per meal from December until egg laying.

Supplementation is advised, because vitamin/mineral deficiencies are common in captive iguanas. However, **calcium and fat-soluble vitamins [A,D,E,K] can be over-supplemented. To avoid over-supplementation, obtaining vitamins from a varied diet is the best choice with modest and controlled use of vitamin/mineral additives.** To date there are no documented studies on the specific dietary requirements of the green iguana.

1. **Hatchlings up to 14 inches in length:** Feed twice daily or provide continuous availability. Plant matter needs to be **finely chopped or shredded.**
2. **Juveniles up to 2½ years or 3 feet in length:** Feed once daily. Plant matter fine to medium, chopped or shredded.
3. **Adults over 2½ years and 3 feet in length:** Feed once daily or every other day. Plant matter **coarsely chopped.**

ANIMAL PROTEIN (MEAT) SOURCES ARE NOT NECESSARY. Some iguana books falsely claim iguanas eat small insects as hatchlings and change to plant-eaters as they mature. They are vegetarians from birth even though they may accept unnatural food sources (such as crickets and small mice) while in captivity. There is no scientific documentation showing the need for animal protein sources. **AVOID FEEDING CRICKETS, MEALWORMS OF ANY TYPE, SMALL MICE, PRIMATE DIETS, TROUT CHOW OR DOG AND CAT FOOD.**

Canned, frozen or other commercial iguana diets are more convenient than preparing a fresh salad weekly, but **these commercial diets may not be nutritionally balanced.** Young, rapidly growing iguanas have different dietary needs than adult iguanas, just as puppies are different than adult dogs. Commercial iguana diets do not address this difference and are unproven to sustain iguanas as the only source of nutrition. The ingredients often are a mix of items not available to the wild iguana. Commercial diets may have a role in iguana nutrition, but more study is needed.