Black and White Tegu Care Guide

Loving Leos Reptile Rescue
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Rescue and Rehabilitation
Science-based Education
Advanced Husbandry Practices



Introduction
Shopping List
1.) Supplies
2.) Products to avoid
Quarantining
1.) Why Should You Quarantine?
2.) How to Safely Quarantine
Nutrition
1.) Diet
2.) Feeding Frequency
3.) Supplementation
UVB, Heating and Visible Light
1.) The Importance of UVB
2.) The Importance of Infrared Heating
3.) Bulb Power Density
4.) The Importance of Full Spectrum Lighting and LUX
5.) Proper Lighting Arrangement
6.) Light My Reptile
Temperature, Humidity and UV Index
1.) Temperature Ranges
2.) Humidity Ranges

3.) Safe UVB Exposure

Enrichment

1.) The Importance of Enrichment
2.) Ways to Provide Enrichment

Enclosure Example

Common Tegu Illnesses

1.) Scale Rot
2.) Parasitic Infection
3.) Shedding issues
4.) Fatty Lip
5.) Obesity

Resources

Introduction

Argentine black and white tegus are not a beginner-friendly reptile species. They are active animals requiring as much space as you can provide. They are also highly intelligent, capable of using puzzle toys, learning target training, basic commands, and even potty training. Tegus are thought to be capable of forming bonds with their keepers, preferring them to other people. In the wild, tegus roam vast territories, hunting for prey and scavenging from dead animals. They create large underground burrows to sleep in. During the winter they will dig down into their burrows and brumate until spring.

Shopping List

1.) **Supplies:**

- **FOR 0-8 MONTHS:** 4X2X2' 120 Gallon Front-Opening Terrarium (48x24x24" or larger)
    - Minimum recommended size for ONE juvenile tegu
- **FOR 8+ MONTHS:** 8x4x4' 957 Gallon Front-Opening Terrarium (96x48x48" or larger)
    - **LLRR Inc. advocates for more-than-minimum recommendations. Larger enclosure spaces allow for an animal to have much more freedom of choice, more room for exercise, room to express natural behaviors, and provide more space for natural enrichment. Some alternative size ideas can include, but are not limited to:**
        - **10x4x4' Front-Opening Enclosure**
        - **12x4x4' Front-Opening Enclosure**
        - **16x4x4' Front-Opening Terrarium**
- Linear UVB (long tube, in 4 to 5 foot lengths)
    - Zoo Med ReptiSun T5HO 10.0 UVB Kit
    - Arcadia ProT5 12% UVB Kit
    - Arcadia DragonD3 ProT5 14% UVB Kit
    - Reptile Systems T5HO Zone 3 10.0 UVB Kit
        - IMPORTANT! Please avoid knock-off Chinese brands of UVB you may find on Amazon! These are NOT safe and could harm your pet. Brands to avoid for UVB include ReptiZoo, Giangarden, OIIBO, Lucky Herp, Reptile King, etc. The brands listed above are SAFE and thoroughly tested by experts

        - Please note, each UVB listed above will have differing height requirements. The distance of the UVB lamp plays an important role in ensuring your animal is getting the correct exposure to UVB. If UVB fixtures are mounted above mesh, different mesh types can also affect how much UVB your animal will have access to, and will determine how low/high your basking area needs to be. Please refer to the group **Reptile Lighting** for in-depth information on UVB mounting
- Incandescent Basking Bulb
- **Wattage may vary based on power density of the bulbs, your house temperatures, enclosure height, and height of the basking area. Please refer to the guides in the Facebook group Reptile Lighting, and Light My Reptile for in-depth information on basking lamps**
    - Reptile Systems Eco Halogen
        - **CAUTION! REPTILE ECO SYSTEM HALOGENS HAVE VERY INTENSE BEAMS. THESE MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR EVERY SET UP**
    - ReptiZoo Intense Basking Spot Lamp
    - Exo Terra Intense Basking Spot Lamp
    - Arcadia Basking Spot Lamp
        - Wattage may vary based on your house temperatures, enclosure height, and height of the basking area. Please refer to the guides in the Facebook group **Reptile Lighting** for in-depth information on basking lamps
        - **Please note, tegus are large animals. You may need multiple basking lamps to cover their entire body and to reach the basking temperatures they need**
- Ceramic Heat Emitter
    - Use ONLY for extra ambient heat if needed. Do not use as the main heat source
- Laser thermometer gun
- LED 5000-7000k Light Bar
- LED 5000-6500k, 36w or higher Spot Lamp
- Hygrometer/thermometer devices x 2
- Temperature probe
- Water dish
- Flat stones for basking, stacking, natural nail filing. Make sure the stones are heavy enough that your tegu can't lift them
- Large basking platform, big enough for the tegu to lay entirely on
- Large cork bark and logs to create hides, climbing options
    - At least one hide should be used as a humid hide to aid in shedding
- Outlet Timer/Power Strip
- Reptivite OR Repashy Calcium Plus LoD Multivitamin
- Zoo Med Calcium with D3
- Zoo Med Calcium without D3
- Safe Substrates
    - Scott's Organic Topsoil mixed with Quikrete Play Sand
    - Reptisoil
    - Reptisoil mixed with coco chips, moss and leaf litter
    - Zilla Jungle Mix

- Bio Dude Terra Firma

2.) **Products to Avoid:** (This is not a complete list, just a compilation of the most common unsafe items on the market)

- Coil Florescent UVB Bulbs
  - These bulbs are not inherently bad, but because of their compact size, they should be used in a horizontal position for a wider spread. For many medium and large-sized reptiles who openly bask during the day, they may not provide enough coverage on the animal's body for proper D3 synthesis
- Mercury Vapor Bulbs
  - These bulbs can lead to serious UVB and heat burns. They do provide UVB and heat all in one, but are dangerously inconsistent in their output and cannot be controlled with a dimming device. MVB's also produce an unnatural green light, which may affect an animal's color vision and inhibit natural behaviors
- Reptile Carpet
  - Snags teeth, holds bacteria. Cannot be dampened without molding risk
- Walnut Shell Substrate
  - Serious risk of impaction, oral, nasal and eye blockages. If ingested, this material can cause internal damage
- Calcium Sand
  - Encourages reptiles to eat it to supplement calcium, but can cause serious and sometimes fatal impaction
- Aspen Bedding
  - This is not a suitable substrate for tegus. It cannot be dampened to hold the humidity these animals need for hydration and shedding, and will mold. This can lead to respiratory infections
- UVB "test" Cards
  - These items do not accurately detect UVB. They react to light emitted by heat lamps as well, and do not tell you exactly how much UVB is being emitted by a bulb
- UVB "test" Accessories and Décor
  - Just like "test" cards, these items do not accurately detect UVB, and will react to UVA as well.
- Colored Heat Bulbs
  - Colored bulbs (red, blue, purple) wash out a reptile's color vision. This can interfere with their natural circadian rhythm and behavior. Heat bulbs should mimic the warm/white color of sunlight
- Heat Mats
  - Heat mats do not provide the correct Infrared heating reptiles need for proper warming, metabolism, digestion. Even with thermostat use, power failures can occur leading to severe, even fatal burns
- Heat Rocks
  - Heat rocks do not provide the correct Infrared heating reptiles need for proper warming, metabolism, digestion. These items have been known to cause serious, sometimes fatal burns
- Cloth and Hemp Hammocks
  - These items can tear out claws and teeth. They are easily soiled and will hold bacteria
- LED UVB Products

    - As of current research (2026), LED UVB products are not recommended for safe usage in reptile keeping. They do not produce vital UVA2 wavelengths, which signal an animal's body to stop producing pre-D3. This can potentially lead to **hypervitaminosis D3**, and **photoconjunctivitis**
- Liquid Calcium and Vitamin Products
    - Liquid vitamins degrade more rapidly compared to powder supplements. There is also less guarantee that the animal will consume enough of the liquids for any real benefits. Deficiency-related illnesses often occur from using these products. Liquid vitamin and calcium products such as those from Zilla, Fluker's and Exo Terra should be avoided

Quarantining

1.) Why Should You Quarantine?

- Quarantining should be done when you first bring your new tegu home. This is to monitor behaviors, and to give you time to have fecal testing done to check for parasites before moving your tegu into their permanent setup
- Typically a quarantine period will last **2 to 3 months**
- Quarantine setups are simplified for the sake of maintenance and monitoring. Keeping accessories to a minimum as well as using paper towels will make clean-up and finding droppings for sampling easier.

2.) How to Safely Quarantine:

- New animals should be kept separately from your other pets, if other pets, especially other reptiles, are present in the home. If possible, keep them in a separate room
- Sanitize the new animal's equipment and accessories separately from other pets' items
- Use separate feeding tools for the new animal
- Use paper towel flooring for easier clean-up and sanitizing
- Schedule fecal and physical exams to check for parasites and possible underlying health issues
- For sick animals, wear gloves when handling, and thoroughly sanitize afterwards

Nutrition

1.) Diet:

- Tegus are omnivorous reptiles, feeding on birds, mice, rats, eggs, lizards, amphibians and carrion in the wild. Providing a variety of whole-prey feeders and fresh fruits and vegetables in captivity is a great way to give your tegu a well-rounded diet
- Loving Leos Reptile Rescue does not recommend feeding live prey items to tegus, except for insects, and especially unsupervised. There is a risk the prey will escape, harm your tegu, and a higher risk of parasitic infection. Frozen-thawed whole prey items from quality sources are much safer. Fresh fruits and vegetables are also recommended.
    - Safe frozen-thawed whole prey items **(feed prey items with fur, scales or feathers sparingly to avoid impaction risks)**
        - Mice
        - Small rats
        - Chicks
        - Quail
        - Gerbils
        - Hamsters

        - Newborn rabbit
    - Safe insects
        - Shell-less snails
        - Locusts
        - Dubia roaches
            - **CAUTION! DUBIA ROACHES CAN RETAIN HIGH URIC ACID LEVELS. EXCESS URIC ACID CAN LEAD TO RENAL ISSUES AND/OR GOUT. WE RECOMMEND FEEDING ONLY MEDIUM DUBIAS (1/2" OR SMALLER), AND ONLY 5-8 IN A FEEDING SESSION.**
        - Silkworms
        - Hissing roaches
        - Black soldier fly larvae
        - Superworms
        - Captive-bred hornworms (wild-caught are toxic!)
    - Safe meats
        - Beef hearts (dust with calcium)
        - Quail eggs (feed sparingly)
        - Chicken eggs (feed sparingly)
        - Chicken legs (with bones)
        - Ground turkey
        - Blue gill fish
        - Catfish
        - Rabbit meat (legs with bones can be fed)
        - Human-grade frogs
        - White-tail deer meat, liver, heart
    - Safe vegetables and greens
        - Collar, mustard, turnip greens
        - Kale
        - Cactus pads
        - Squash
        - Zucchini
        - Yam
        - Dandelion greens and flowers
        - Alfalfa
        - Bell pepper
    - Safe fruits
        - Banana
        - Blueberries
        - Strawberries
        - Red or green grapes
        - Blackberries
        - Figs
        - Mango
        - Papaya

2.) Supplementation:

- Tegus get much of their nutritional needs from the fresh and frozen-thawed whole prey items they eat. However, multivitamin and mineral supplementing can help your tegu "top up" on their vitamin stores, and avoid serious dietary deficiencies.
- **Please note, when feeding ground meats or animal organs, the phosphorous-to-calcium ratio needs to be corrected for proper calcium absorption. <u>5g of calcium needs to be added per 1lb of meat</u>. This can be pre-mixed into a mash**



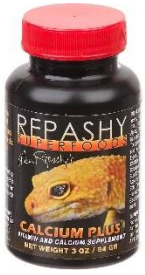


Arcadia RevitalizeD3, EarthPro-A, CalciumProMG





Zoo Med Reptivite with D3, Calcium without D3, Calcium with D3



Repashy Calcium Plus. This can be paired with Zoo Med Calcium and ZooMed Calcium D3



B Complex supplement, can be used occasionally to help with shedding

3.) Feeding Regiment and Frequency:

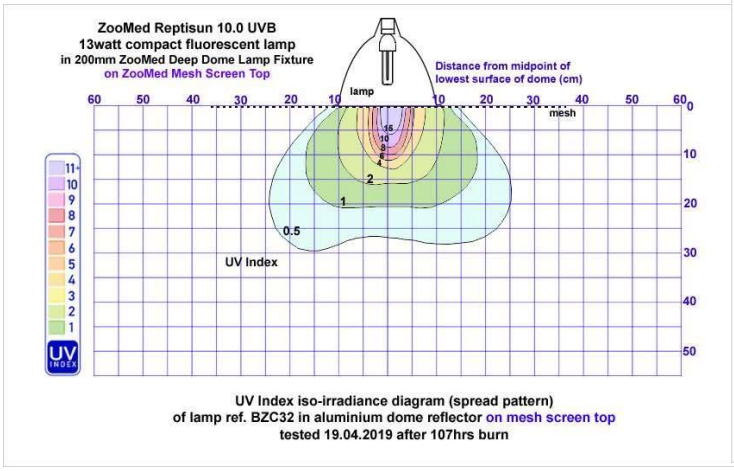
- Many keepers opt to make pre-made mashes of meats, vegetables and fruit
- **For juveniles**, these mixes should be made up of 60% invertebrates (insects), 10% vegetables and fruit, and 30% vertebrates (small animals)

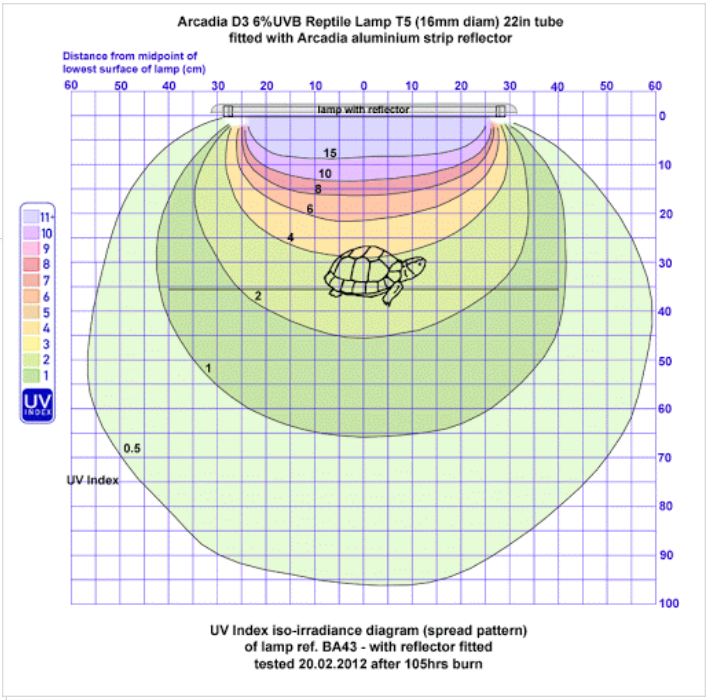
- **For adults**, these mixes should be made up of 60% protein, 30% vegetables, and 10% fruit. Occasionally alternating fruits and vegetable ratios is also beneficial. You can use a food processor to blend the ingredients together
    - **Making a mash:**
        - Plain calcium **without D3** should be added to meats, **5g of calcium per 1lb of meat**.
        - Portion out your meats, vegetables and fruit ratios
        - Use a food processor to form ingredients into a mash
        - After blending, drain excess fluid and portion out meals in Zip Loc bags. Portion sizes should be roughly the same size as your tegu's head. Freeze meals for up to 8 months and thaw out as needed
        - Vertebrate and insect prey items should not be added to mash mixes, but fed separately
        - Whole prey items should be no larger than your tegu's head
    - **Juveniles 0-12 Months: 7x's a week**
        - **Sunday: Whole prey or whole bone-in meats + Calcium D3**
        - **Monday: Insects + Calcium**
        - **Tuesday: Insects + Multivitamin**
        - **Wednesday: Mash + Calcium**
        - **Thursday: Insects + Calcium D3**
        - **Friday: Insects + Calcium**
        - **Saturday: Mash + Calcium**
    - **12 Months+ : 2-3x's a week**
        - **Sunday: Mash + Multivitamin**
        - **Wednesday: Mash + Calcium D3**
        - **(Offered only 1-2 days a month) Saturday: Whole prey or whole bone-in meats + Calcium**
- **Additional Notes on Feeding**
    - Feeding whole bone-in meats such as chicken, rabbit or frog legs provide opportunities for your tegu to chew. Firm fruits such as papaya and mango are also beneficial for gum and lip health. Chewing helps to flex lip tissue and can prevent one of the causes for fatty lip issues (see **Common Tegu Illnesses** below)
    - Feeding whole prey items provides nutrients from organ meats and bones

UVB, Heating and Visible Light

1.) **The Importance of UVB**

- UVB lighting is superior to D3 powder supplementation for the following benefits:
    - Creates beta-endorphin "feel-good" hormones in the skin
    - Promotes better organ health
    - Stimulates white blood cells and promotes better immune health
    - Facilitates natural D3 synthesis for calcium absorption
    - Simulates natural UVB that would be provided by the sun in the wild and promotes more natural behaviors
    - **Full-body coverage of UVB wavelengths is important for proper D3 synthesis for diurnal reptiles**

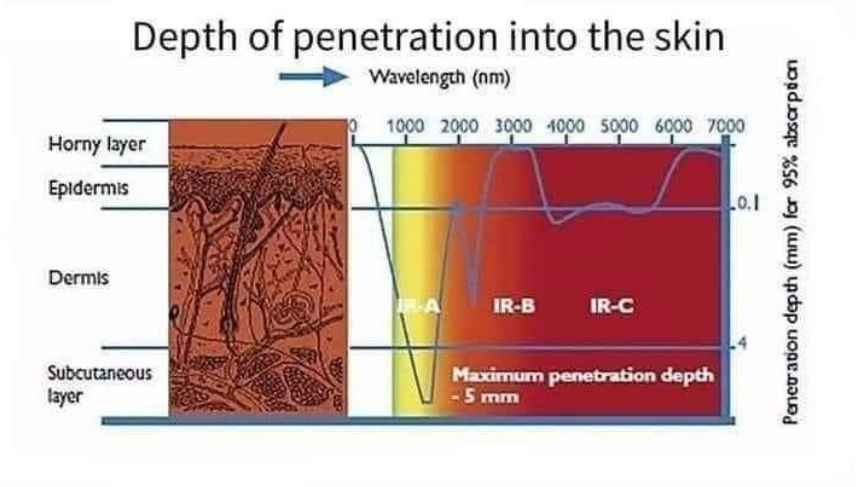




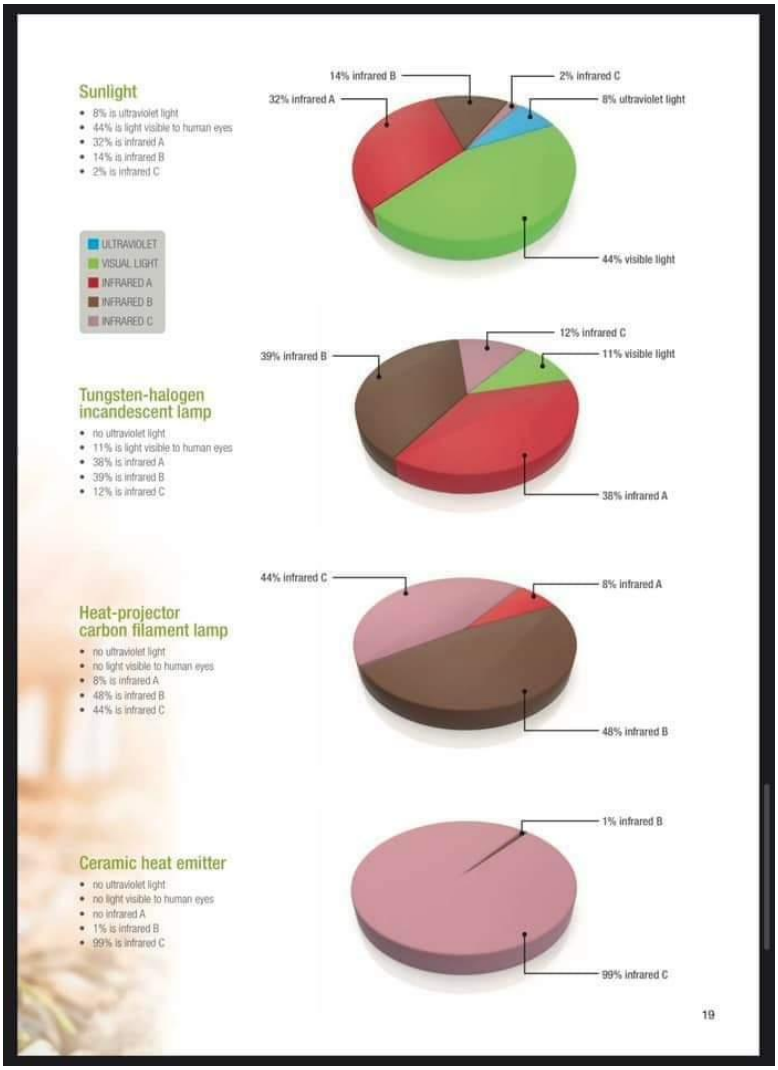
Difference between Coil/Compact UVB coverage, versus Linear T5HO tubes

2.) The Importance of Infrared Heating

- Heat sources that provide Infrared A and B are important for:
    - Deep tissue-penetrating heat
    - Faster warming of the animal's body
    - Less time needed to bask
    - Better metabolism and digestion
    - Promotion of more natural behaviors
    - Surfaces below the basking area that absorb IR-A wavelengths will radiate that heat back out as IR-C, so your animal gets the full spectrum of Infrared heating



Example illustrating the depth of penetration between IR-A, IR-B and IR-C wavelengths. IR-A penetrates into the subcutaneous layer, where IR-C is relatively surface-level on the epidermis

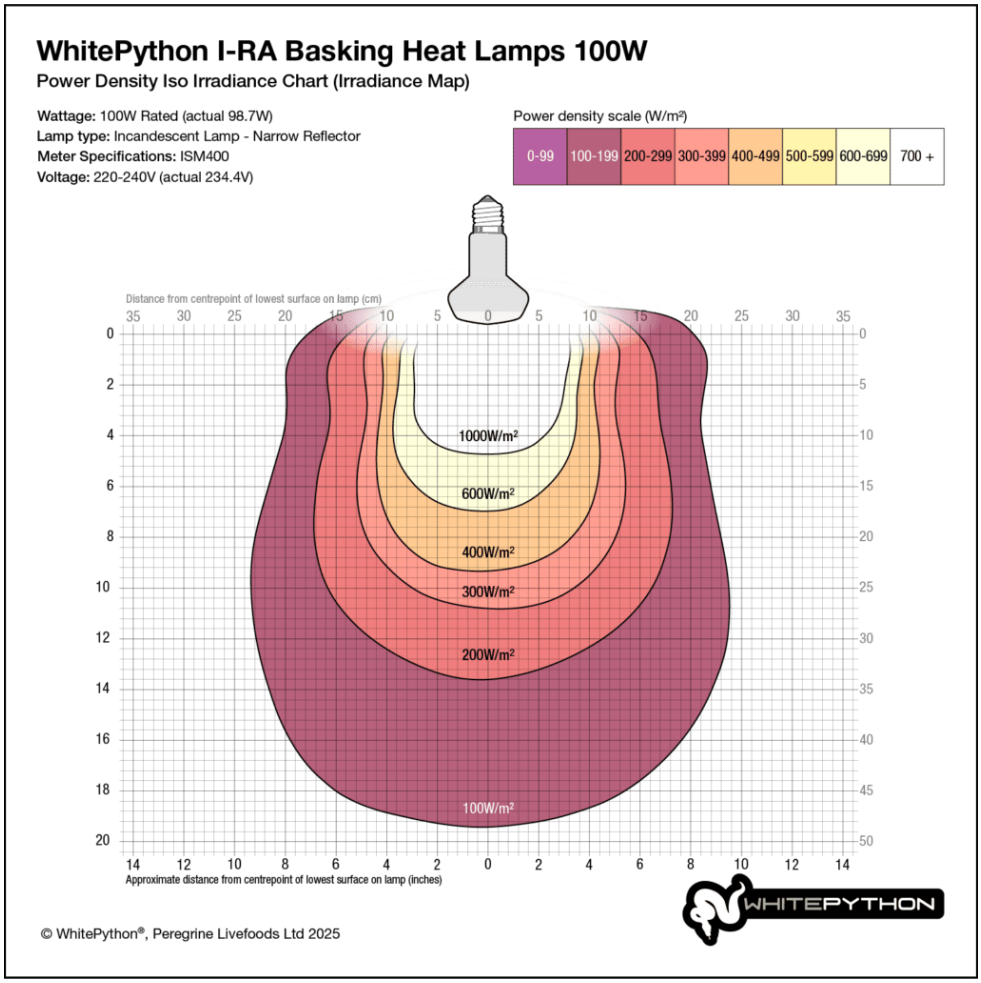


The difference between various heating elements. Incandescent lights provide the most natural array of IR

3.) Bulb Power Density

- Power density is the intensity and spread of infrared radiation from an incandescent/halogen heat lamp. This is measured by **wattage-per-meter squared (W/m^2)**.
- Power densities vary between bulb styles and brands, and providing infrared is not one-size-fits all.
- It's important to note that basking surface temperatures don't tell us much about the power density of a bulb. This is because different basking surface materials don't absorb and radiate infrared the same (i.e., a slate basking surface and a faux resin rock may give different temperature readings, even when under the same heat lamp and at the same distance).
- Ultimately, we want to aim to provide irradiance between **200-350W/m^2**. The distance for this range is different between bulb styles and brands, but there is an easy "test" to measure this distance for the bulb you have. This will help you determine how high or low your basking area should be.
    - **The Hand Test:** Human skin is just as sensitive to infrared radiation as that of reptiles. The tingly sensation of sunlight on your bare skin is the effect of infrared penetrating the epidermis and down into muscles. For this test, think of your hand as your pet reptile's back.
        - Let your basking bulb warm up for a few hours
        - Place your hand on the bottom of the enclosure and raise it until you feel tingly warmth

- If you can comfortably keep your hand under the lamp at this distance for 60 seconds, **you are within the 200-350W/m² range**
- **Different reptile species need different levels of irradiance exposure. Refer to part 6.) Light My Reptile for assistance determining what exposure level your tegu needs**

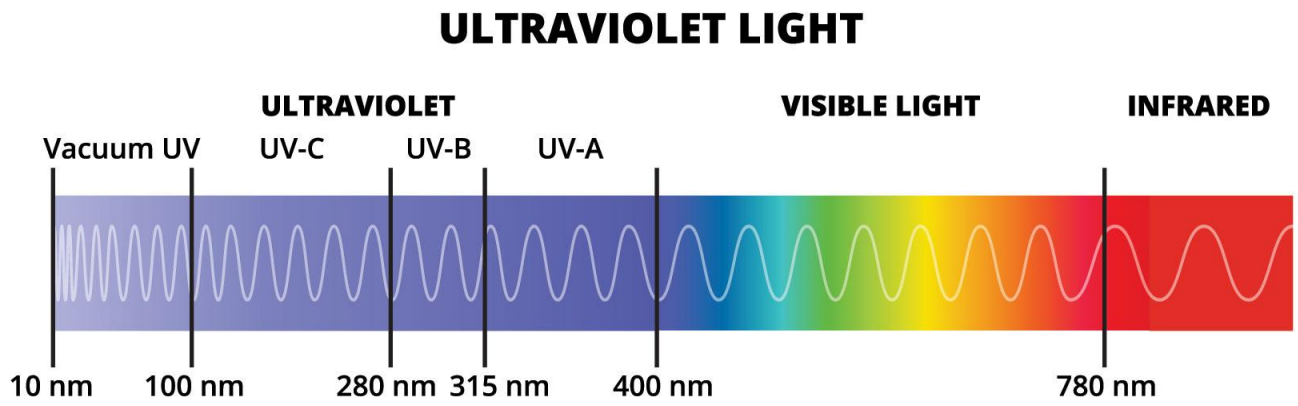


Power Density Irradiance Chart, © WhitePython. Note the range for 200-350W/m² is between 14-10cm (5.5-3.9in) for this particular bulb, but may be closer or farther away based on bulb wattage and make. Refer to Tomaskas LTD for irradiance charts for a variety of bulbs

4.) The Importance of Full Spectrum Lighting and LUX

- Many reptiles have **tetrachromatic vision**, meaning they have four rods in their eyes for color detection and can see much more of the visible light spectrum than we can. Providing additional full spectrum lighting helps with:
  - More visible colors for your animal to see
  - Promotion of natural behaviors
  - Closer visible replication of what they would experience under sunlight
- Currently, there are very few products available that cover more of the visible spectrum (as of 2026). Companies working on true LED full spectrum products are:
  - Fauna-Lux
  - Reptile Systems

- **LUX** refers to the amount of light that illuminates surfaces. Consideration should be taken that the sun's brightness is far greater than the UVB, heat lamps and LED's we offer in captivity (the sun offers 32,000 – 100,000 LUX!) Providing more **LUX** over the **basking area** in the form of bright, white light can promote:
    - More natural basking behaviors
    - Mental and physical wellbeing



Quality lighting will cover some of the visible light spectrum (here shown between 400nm to 780nm); however, the purple, or Ultraviolet spectra will be covered in part by UVB lighting. Note that UV-C wavelengths are excluded from UVB and full spectrum equipment and are dangerous

5.) Proper Lighting Arrangement

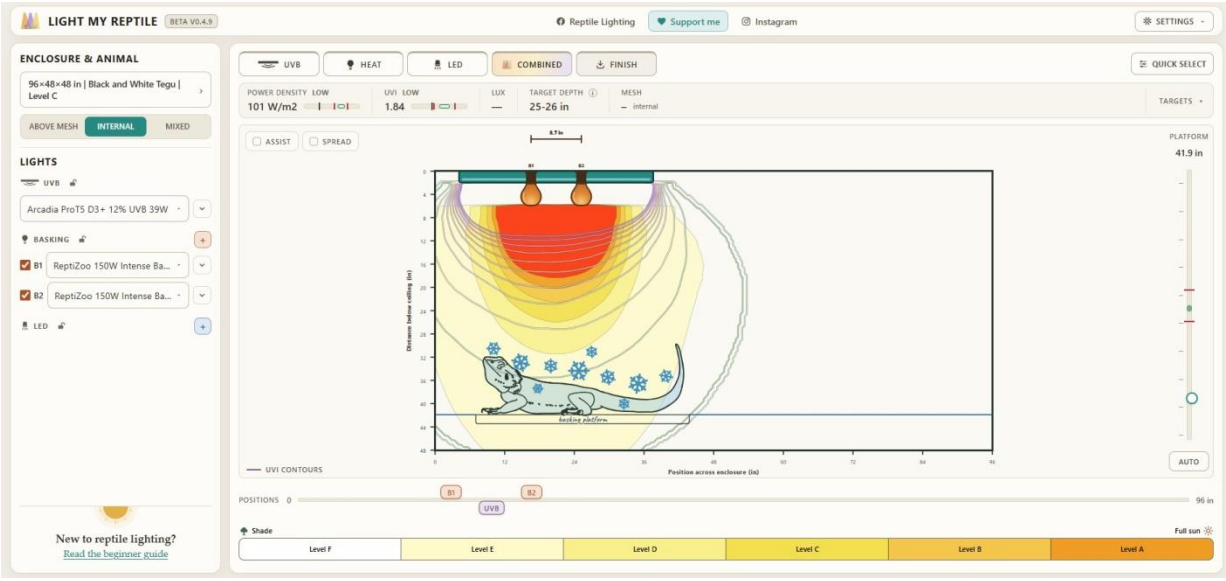
- Heating and UVB lighting should be provided in a "light-to-dark", "hot-to-cool" gradient, with the highest concentration of light over the basking area
- Basking bulbs should be centered with the middle of the UVB tube, where the strongest UVB wavelengths are. This effectively creates a "patch of sun" where the animal can get UVB and heat all in one area
- LED lighting should overlap with the UVB and basking bulb



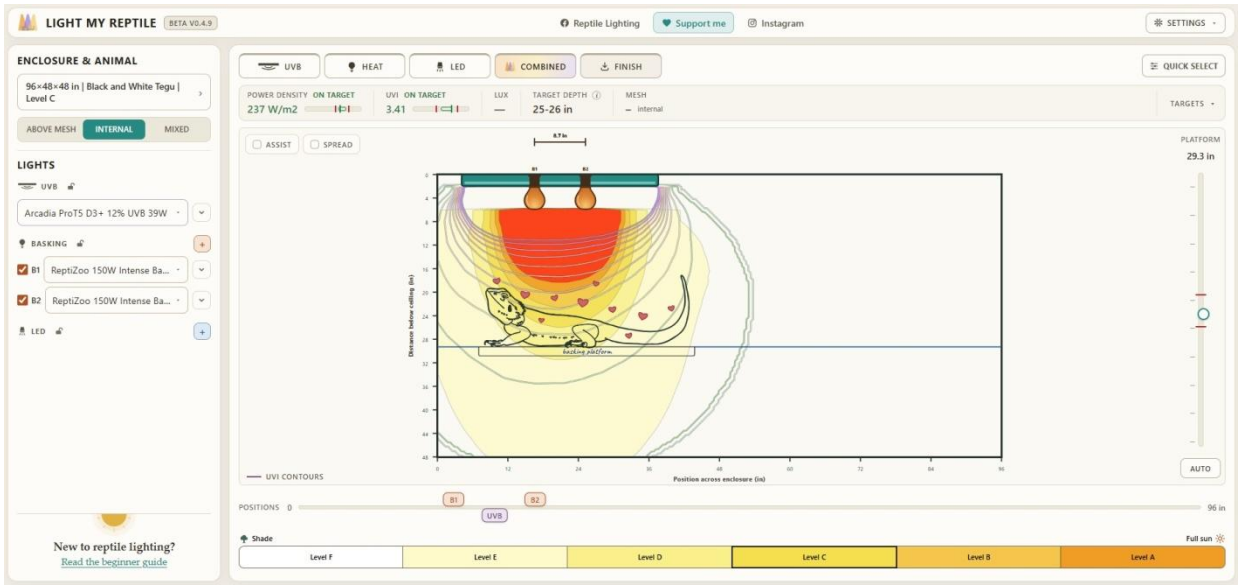
1.) Six 2ft T5 Barrina LED bars, 2.) Sansi 36w Spot Lamp, 3.) Arcadia 3ft ProT5 Dragon 14% UVB, 4.) One 150w Exo Terra Intense Basking Spot Lamp, Two Exo Terra 75w Intense Basking Spot Lamp, 5.) Braun 4ft LED shop light

6.) Light My Reptile Tool

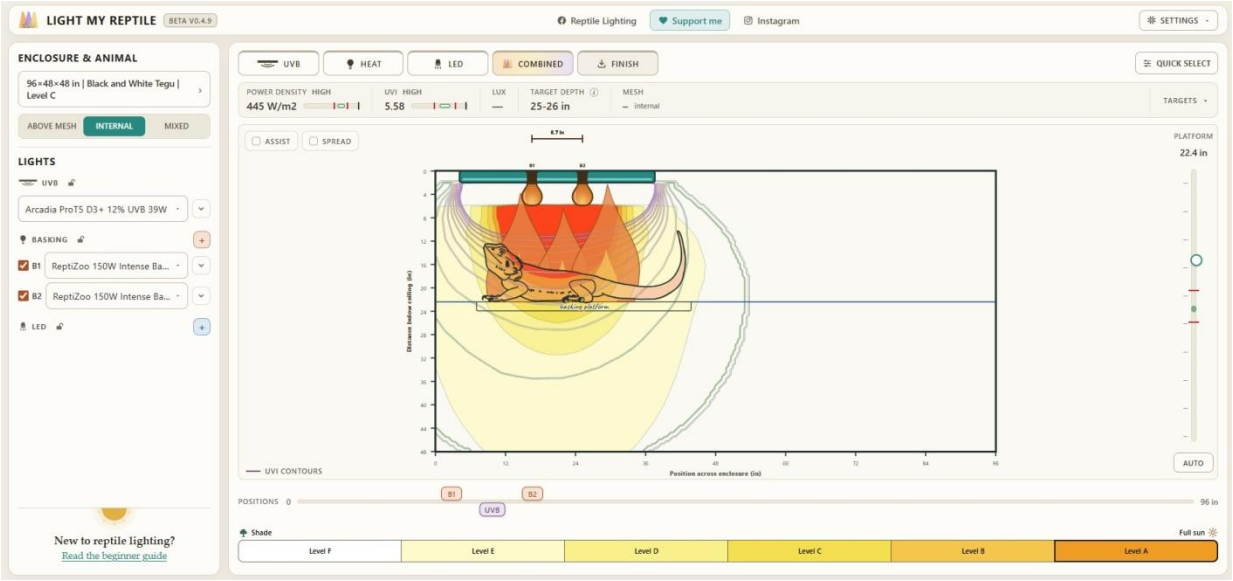
- Light My Reptile is a fantastic tool designed to help keepers take much of the guesswork out of proper lighting and heating provisions. It is an application that was created by Nathan Burton, using data collected by the experts who moderate the group Reptile Lighting.
- This tool allows you to choose lighting, heating and LED equipment that have all been thoroughly tested and are trusted in the herpetoculture hobby. It also lets you choose different mesh densities, you can choose different species, input custom enclosure sizes, and you can mix and match various equipment to see what would be the best combination for UVB, heating and lighting for your pet.



Reference image courtesy of Light My Reptiles. Note the reptile is "cold", being too far away from the specified UVB and heat. The equipment is mounted above a mesh type that blocks 35% of wavelengths



Adjusting the height of the reptile shows the optimal distance it should be from the specified UVB and heat



Raising the reptile's basking platform too high risks overexposure to heat and UVB, which will lead to severe burns

Temperature, Humidity and UV Index

1.) Temperature

- Temperatures should be provided in a "hot-to-cool" gradient across the tank, with your basking bulb placed on one side of the enclosure
- Temperatures can be monitored by placing a hygrometer/thermometer device on the hot side, and one on the cool side. A thermometer temperature probe can be placed just outside of the beam of light beneath the incandescent heat bulb.
    - Hot side temperatures: 85-90f
    - Refer to the "hand test" for guidance on the basking area, but aim for 115-125f degrees surface temperature
    - Cool side temperatures: 75-80f
- Surface temperatures can be measured with a laser thermometer gun

2.) Humidity

- Black and white tegus live in Argentina. This region experiences high levels of humidity
- Tegu burrows often have higher humidity levels than the outside environment. A humid hide that is kept consistently damp (but not soaking) will give the tegu a reliable retreat for humidity
- In captivity, we can provide humidity spikes, but should aim for:
    - 50-80% ambient humidity ranges
    - Occasional spikes of 100% with adequate dry-out periods can be implemented
- Hygrometer/Thermometer combo devices can be placed on the cool and hot sides to monitor ambient temperatures
- Automated misting systems, like the MistKing or similar equipment, can be used to create humidity spikes once in the morning, and once in the evening. **Do not schedule the mister to go off multiple times a day. This can lead to excess bacterial growth, which can cause respiratory infections**

- Ensure your enclosure has adequate ventilation. Providing good airflow will prevent the air from stagnating and causing a bacterial bloom. This can be achieved by installing mesh vents, and using an intake/outtake fan system

3.) Safe UVB Exposure

- UVB should be provided through a linear tube that spans halfway across the enclosure. It should be aligned with your basking bulb to one side of the tank, with the basking bulb centered with the middle of the tube
- Not all UVB bulbs are created equally! Certain strengths, bulb styles and brands are not safe or effective for tegus (refer to the Shopping List for safe UVB products)
- Tegus are **diurnal** reptiles. This means they are most active during the day, and sleep at night. Tegus need to openly bask under appropriate heating and UVB to properly energize themselves and synthesize essential D3
- On the Ferguson Zone (the UV requirement scale for various reptile species), tegus are in Zone 3. This means they need a UVB index between 3.0-5.0
- The height of your enclosure, whether your UVB is mounted above mesh or inside the enclosure, what brand of tank you have (different open-top tank brands have different mesh types) all affect how much UVB your tegu will be exposed to, and how high or low your basking area needs to be to achieve the correct UVB index. To figure out how to safely provide UVB for tegu, refer to the following sources:
    - Reptile Lighting on Facebook
    - Northampton Reptile Center – Ferguson Zone
    - Thomas Griffiths, Tomaskas LTD
    - Reptile Academy
    - Tegu Keepers
    - The Tegu-Phile
    - Reptiles: Advancing Husbandry Practices
    - Arcadia Reptile (for Arcadia product specifications)
    - Zoo Med (for Zoo Med product specifications)
    - Leap Habitats (for Leap Habitats product specifications)
    - Reptile Systems (for Reptile Systems product specifications)

Enrichment

1.) The Importance of Enrichment

- Many reptile species, including tegus, enjoy living in a stimulating environment where they can climb, bask, sleep, hunt and explore
- When these animals are housed in small, bare enclosures, or not given the opportunity for roaming time outside of their enclosure, they often exhibit "stereotypy" behaviors, which may include glass surfing, aggression, frequent hiding, pacing, pushing at enclosure doors or corners, and listlessness. These are all indicators of boredom, stress, frustration, anxiety, and eventually sensory-atrophy
- Giving our animals more space and more things to investigate, climb, etc, allows them to exhibit natural behaviors and stimulates their senses. These provisions also decrease fear and stress, and enhance the animal's sense of security

2.) Ways to Provide Enrichment

- Enrichment can be provided by "cluttering up" your tegu's home. Add in lots of flat, stacked stones (just make sure they are securely placed and heavy enough so the tegu can't harm themselves by burrowing beneath the rocks), use natural substrates for digging, bury cork bark rounds in the substrate to create tunnels, stack lots of driftwood to create climbing opportunities
- Tegus are intelligent, curious, and active animals who love to investigate new things in their environment. Some tegus have exhibited almost play-like behavior, using puzzle feeders, chasing balls, and working to get food from treat toys. Just be sure to use toys that can't easily be destroyed, or are small enough for the tegu to swallow
- If you happen to have a secure backyard, you can try walking them with a harness and leash. This is a great way to get natural sunlight and stimulation. If you have an area in your home away from other animals and free of loose items the tegu might eat or damage, you can let them free-roam for a few hours a day



Loving Leos Reptile Rescue Tegu Ambassador, Delphine, using a feeding toy with a prey item inside

Enclosure Example

- This enclosure belongs to Loving Leos Reptile Rescue. It is an 8x4x4 PVC enclosure, bioactive with live plants, LED lighting, UVB and incandescent heating





Common Tegu Illnesses

1.) Scale Rot

- Scale rot is often caused by unsanitary living conditions and substrate that is too damp. These conditions create breeding grounds for bacteria, which can lead to severe infection and tissue damage
- Scale rot can be prevented by leaving areas of substrate in the enclosure dry, implementing dry-out periods (only spray down the enclosure when humidity levels are too low, and thorough misting done a few times a week, letting the enclosure return to normal humidity levels in between)



Scale rot, possible necrosis on a tegu's neck

2.) Parasitic Infection

- Parasites are a common problem for captive reptiles, especially those who need insect or animal proteins in their diets. Wild-caught tegus are more susceptible to being carriers, and improper care in captivity can exacerbate parasite loads and infection symptoms
- Symptoms of parasite infections can include lethargy, weight loss, lack of appetite, runny, loose and particularly smelly stools
- Fecal exams should be done one to two times a year, and any time there are notable behavioral changes to rule out the possibility of parasite infections, and to treat them as necessary
- It is important to maintain a clean environment for your tegu to prevent the spread of illness and parasites. Be sure to keep feces off of their skin, and clean their feeding accessories (water and food dishes, tongs etc) regularly

3.) Shedding Issues

- Shedding problems in tegus are common. They can occur from incorrect humidity levels, improper UVB, and improper supplementation
- Adding B vitamin complex supplements to your tegu's meals on occasion can help with shedding
- Making sure humidity levels are where they need to be, particularly when the animal is going into shed, will help prevent skin issues
- Be sure to monitor tail and toe tips for constricted shed. If stuck shed is left on the toes or tail tip, blood circulation can get cut off, causing the appendages to die, fall off and possibly lead to necrosis



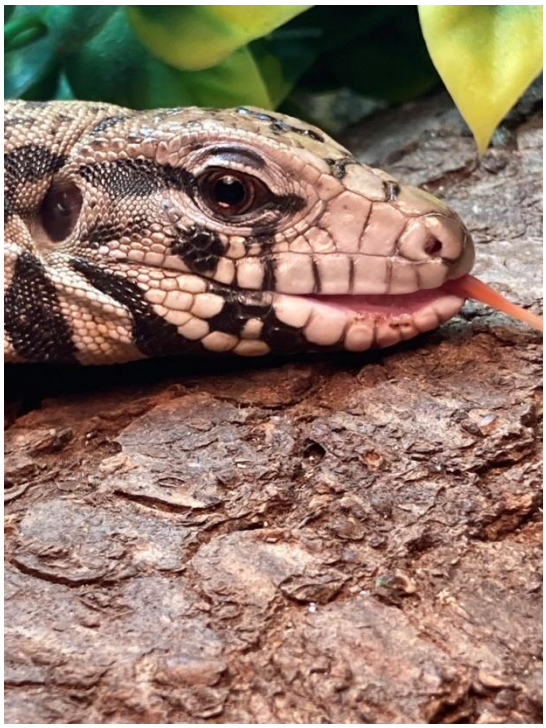
Red tegu missing several front and hind toes from constricted shed. This can affect the tegu's ability to walk and climb

4.) Fatty Lip

- There is no general consensus on any one cause for this issue, but common reasons for a fatty, loose or flabby appearance to the lower lip may include a diet too high in protein, obesity, oral tumors, or mouth rot (stomatitis)
- If your tegu isn't able to fully close its mouth and the lower lip appears swollen, blood work, biopsies, medicinal treatment and surgery are potential options to figure out the cause of symptoms, and alleviate the problem



Oral tumor in a Colombian tegu



Stomatitis in a young Argentine tegu

5.) **Obesity**

- Obesity in tegus is a very common problem. Tegus naturally have a big appetite and will eat just about anything they can find in the wild, including carrion
- In captivity, tegus have less opportunity to roam as they would in the wild to search for food, so they generally don't get as much exercise. Being mindful of their diets, keeping track of their weight, adjusting meals as needed, and giving your tegu time to explore outside of their enclosure are all good ways to ensure your tegu stays within a healthy weight range
- Obesity can cause a number of health issues, including fatty liver disease, kidney problems, gout, lethargy, and in severe cases, a shorter lifespan

- Physical signs of an overweight tegu can include: loss of a visible lateral line (the horizontal fold of skin along a tegu's sides), ears disappearing into skin folds, fat rolls around the torso and tail



6.) **Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)**

- Metabolic bone disease is one of the most common illnesses in reptile species across the board. It is caused by improper diet and supplementation, and providing improper or no UVB. In rare cases, animals may have a predisposition for developing the disease from poor genetics, which may cause a compromised ability to absorb calcium
- MBD causes deformities in an animal's body from a malabsorption of calcium. Reptiles need vitamin D3 to absorb and metabolize calcium, and when D3 isn't being provided through their diets and UVB lighting, their bodies will begin to pull calcium directly from their bones to maintain organ, muscle and neurological function
- Physical deformities from this condition can be painful and are permanent. MBD can be stopped from worsening by correcting care and bone density can be improved, but deformities are lifelong



A tegu with a deformed spine, tail, limbs and toes from MBD

Resources

- **Facebook**
  - Reptile Lighting
  - Behavior Education
  - Tegu Keepers
  - The Tegu-Phile
  - Reptiles: Advancing Husbandry Practices
  - Loving Leos Reptile Rescue Inc
  - Light My Reptile
- **YouTube**
  - Animals at Home
  - Reptiles and Research
  - Herp Talk
  - Jessica's Animal Friends
- **Supplies**
  - Pangea Reptile
  - Bean Farm
  - Light Your Reptiles
  - Reptile Basics
  - Dubia Roaches
  - PetCo
  - PetSmart
  - RodentPro
  - Layne Labs
- **Experts for science-based research**
  - Thomas Griffiths, Tomaskas LTD, Zoo Husbandry Consultant
  - Dr. Frances Baines, Veterinary Surgeon

- Dr. Sarina Wunderlich, light physicist
- Lori Torrini, Behavior Education, Animal Behaviorist
- The British Herpetological Society