Uromastyx species

Distribution:

North Africa, across to the Red sea to Arabia and further east to India & Pakistan, west to east through Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti & Somalia.

Housing:

Apart from the large species such as aegyptius & flavofasciata most can be housed in a cage 3ft X 2ft X 1ft high for a pair. The use of a plastic box 20ins X 12ins X 10ins sold as storage or play bins and fitted below the floor of the cage serves as a hide and burrow. Access to the box is via a hole cut in the floor of the vivarium towards the front. A hole the same size as the cage hole can be cut through the holding shelf for the cage allowing access to the plastic box that is placed on a support shelf below the cage shelf. It is important that the top of the box fits neatly to the underside of the shelf above so animals that enter the box cannot escape or kick sand out through any gaps during their digging activities. The box can be filled with silver sand (playpit sand) mixed with peat, 50/50 or 70/30 leaving a 2-inch gap at the top.

Heating and Lighting:

Full spectrum lighting such as Reptisun or D3 Reptile lamps should be used. Two or three 2ft lamps grouped together would be ideal. A basking spot with a 100W Active UVHeatlamp and a 100w ceramic heater will give a hot spot. The UVHeat lamp is a state of the art lamp used to allow animals to naturally synthesise Vitamin D3, essential for long-term maintenance. The only downside is this type of Mercury vapour lamp cannot be used with a dimmerstat, as it is a self-ballasted type of lighting. Place a terracotta ridge tile below the heat source for a cave and elevated basking spot. A dimmer-stat should be connected to the ceramic heater to keep the temperature at the hottest point 45-50 deg C during the day. These temperatures may seem high but Uromastyx often maintain body temperatures as high as 44 deg C during the heat of the day. The ambient cage temperature should be 28 deg C. Night temperatures can go down to 16 deg C. Usually all that will be needed to achieve the night-time lows is for all lighting and heat to be automatically switched off. Rooms housing animals that drop below this temperature during the activity periods of the year can be backed up by a thermostatically controlled ceramic heater with a day/night temperature change.

Hibernation:

Start to lower temperatures during the 2 month rest period of the year. Normally December and January. Temperatures at this time can be day, 20-25C, night down to 10-12C. Daylight should be reduced by an hour per week from 14 hours to 6-8hrs in December. At the end of January reverse the process. (Except for animals under 2 years old). Food should be greatly reduced prior to this period, allowing several days between feeds. The Uromastyx will become more dormant, hardly feeding, but basking erratically. Make sure that their stomachs do not contain any food if temperatures are low or problems will occur with food decomposing in the stomach. This can be fatal! Normally if temperatures are reduced along with shorter day lengths, (photoperiod) the animals will not want to feed much or at all. If the gut is not empty the animals will need to bask from time to time to digest what remains in their stomachs. The difference between day and night

temperatures should be much greater at this time. Full hibernation is not advised or necessary and could be dangerous.

Food and Water:

FOOD: SPRING GREENS, LOLLO ROSSA, ENDIVE, RADICCHIO,CORN SALAD(LAMBS LETTUCE), ROCKET, CHINESE CABBAGE, FINELY SHREDDED CARROT, WATER CRESS, DANDELION, CLOVER, PLANTAIN, CONVOLVULOUS, POLYGONUM(RUSSIAN VINE), CHICK WEED, ALPINE PLANTS(ADJUGA), SPROUTED SEEDS,ALFALFA, MUNG BEANS, RADISH, CHICK PEAS, LENTILS, SOYA, WHEAT, DRY SEEDS,PARRAKEET MIX, CHOPPED HAY, HIBISCUS FLOWERS, GAZANIA FLOWERS, CALCIUM/REPTAVITE MIX, GIANT MEALWORMS. WATER: Water is not normally taken. Moisture will be obtained from the leafy green foods. Hatchlings are offered water for the first few weeks of their lives.

Reproduction:

This is fraught with problems due to getting the levels of UV lighting correct which is linked in the body to the synthesis of D3. If Active UVHeat bulbs are used no vitamins and minerals containing D3 should be needed. Oral D3 can be used instead but this is still a grey area as the amount taken in can be under or over the natural parameters, there-by causing the female to produce under calcified eggs and embryos dying in the shell or a toxic reaction on the part of the female. Calcium and phosphorous along with other vitamins and minerals are given as additional supplements. Seasonal cycling is needed to recreate the light and temperature changes that occur during the year to get males to begin courting the females. After fertilisation females may attack their mates and so it could be wise to place the male in a separate cage at this time to avoid injury or trauma.