FAQs: Lizards

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

- What should I feed my lizard?
- What temperature should I keep the terrarium at?
- Why did my lizard's tail fall off?
- Why does my lizard flick out his tongue?
- Why is my lizard's skin falling off?

What should I feed my lizard?

Most lizards are insectivorous and can be fed insects like crickets, mealworms, waxworms, spiders, beetles, and flies. They can also be fed species-specific commercial diets. For example, if you have a bearded dragon, you can feed him Nature Zone Bearded Dragon Bites or if you have a gecko you can feed Nature Zone Gecko Bites.

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What temperature should I keep the terrarium at?

The proper temperature range for most desert-dwelling lizards is 85°-95°F during the day and 80°-85°F at night. The proper temperature range for most tropical lizards is 80°-88°F. Tropical reptiles should never be kept below 80°F. To make sure the terrarium temperature stays within the proper range, monitor the temperature daily using a thermometer. Remember that temperature requirements vary among individual species.

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Why did my lizard's tail fall off?

Many lizards, such as the leopard gecko and green iguana, can autotomize, or drop off part of their tail. It's a defense mechanism that gives the lizard a chance to escape before their predator figures out what is going on. Other lizards will avoid predators by simply hiding or running away, while some, like chameleons, will blend in to their surroundings.

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Why does my lizard flick out his tongue?

Lizards use their tongues to smell. When a lizard flicks his tongue out, the scent sticks to the tongue. Then, when the tongue is brought back into the mouth, the lizard is able to process the scent. Lizards also use their tongues to lap up water and lick their lips after eating. Geckos will even use their tongues to clean their eyes because they don't have any eyelids.

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Why is my lizard's skin falling off?

Like snakes, lizards also shed their skin, only they shed it in small pieces instead of all at once. Shedding periods will be different for all lizards, depending on size, growth rate and environmental conditions. When your lizard is shedding, you'll notice that his skin becomes dull with small white patches. Oftentimes, a lizard will rub up against objects in the terrarium to help remove the skin. Or, the lizard may peel off pieces of skin with his mouth and eat the skin.

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