

water dragon

care sheet



Found in tropical rain forests, usually close to a water source. Water dragons are arboreal and need plenty of space. They are capable of changing shades of colors between green and brown, depending on the temperature.

facts

average adult size:	2 to 3 feet
average life span:	up to 15 years with proper care
diet:	omnivore

Will reach adult size in 1 to 2 years, under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your reptile grows.



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

diet

A well-balanced water dragon diet consists of:

- A variety of insects, including crickets, roaches, mealworms, waxworms and earthworms; frozen/thawed pinkie mice and small common goldfish.
- 10 to 15% of diet should include dark, leafy greens and fruits.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your water dragon:

- Fresh, clean, chlorine-free water should be available at all times.
- Do not use a microwave to defrost frozen rodents and do not prepare them in the same area that you prepare food. If it is unavoidable, be sure to thoroughly disinfect the area. See the Feeding Frozen/Thawed Foods Care Sheet for more information.
- Feed daily. Frozen/thawed pinkies should only be fed occasionally to adult water dragons.
- Sprinkle food with calcium supplement daily and a multi-vitamin supplement once or twice a week.
- Vegetables and fruits not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

housing

- Size - Appropriately sized and shaped habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise. A minimum of a 40 gallon breeder is recommended for adult water dragons.
- Habitat - Provide multiple hiding areas and branches for basking. Maintain 60 to 80% humidity by misting as needed every day.
- Substrate - Use a mulch-type such as coconut fiber or repti-bark.
- Temperature - Temperature gradient (100°F for the warm end and 70°F for the cool end). Use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source.
- Lighting - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10 to 12 hours a day is required. An incandescent day bulb can be used for basking area during daylight hours only; can use a ceramic heater or nocturnal bulb at all hours.
- House adult male water dragons separately and do not house different reptile species together.

normal behavior

- Juveniles can become used to human interaction; as adults, some may become hard to handle and may bite if not properly socialized.
- Some water dragons may rub their noses against the glass of the habitat, causing injury. A 2 to 3" background can be placed around all sides at the bottom of the habitat to discourage your water dragon from doing this.
- Easily frightened or startled; avoid loud noises and quick movements around them.

habitat

maintenance

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week: place water dragon in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell; dry the tank and furnishings completely and add clean substrate.

grooming and hygiene

- Water dragons regularly shed their skin, so ensure humidity of habitat is at appropriate level to allow proper shedding. To facilitate shedding, bathe in a large container that allows the water dragon to immerse its entire body or provide a shed box, a hide box with sphagnum moss, that will aid in the shedding process.

signs of a healthy animal

- Active and alert
- Clear eyes
- Body and tail are filled out
- Healthy skin
- Clear nose and vent
- Eats regularly

red flags

- Weight loss or decreased appetite
- Mucus in mouth or nose
- Swelling
- Lethargic
- Bumps, sores or abrasions on skin
- Labored breathing
- Paralysis of limbs
- Abnormal feces

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.

common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Gastro-intestinal disease	Runny stools, caked or smeared stool around the vent area and loss of appetite caused by bacterial or parasitic infection.	Consult your veterinarian.
Metabolic bone/vitamin deficiency	Inability to absorb calcium or improper amounts of calcium/vitamin D due to insufficient UVB light. If untreated, can lead to a disorder characterized by deformities and softened bones. Swollen limbs and lethargy.	Consult your veterinarian and provide ample UVB lighting and the proper amount of calcium/vitamin supplements.
Nose rub	Red or swollen snout caused by running into tank wall repeatedly.	Consult your veterinarian and make changes to the habitat.
Respiratory disease	Labored breathing and mucus in the mouth or nose. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.	Consult your veterinarian and ensure habitat is the correct temperature.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized habitat
- Substrate
- Moss
- Food and water dishes
- Mealworm dish
- Hideaway place
- Climbing décor
- Plants
- Thermometer
- Humidity gauge
- Heat light
- Heat fixture
- Under-tank heater (optional)
- UVB lighting and fixture
- Vitamin supplement
- Calcium supplement
- Cricket keeper
- Cricket food
- Cricket quencher
- Book about water dragons

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on water dragons and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all reptiles are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your reptile or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for reptiles and should consider not having a reptile as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about small animals and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

