



General care

A healthy Skink should be bright and alert. The body should be well covered with no signs of loose skin. There should be no signs of diarrhoea.

Nails may become over grown and will need to be trimmed, consult your pet shop or vet.

Diarrhoea: this can be caused by incorrect feeding or internal parasite infestation.

Mouth rot: cheesy deposits appear in the mouth.

Respiratory problems: signs include fluid or mucus from the nose.

Bone disorders: signs include twitching limbs, poorly formed limbs, swollen limbs and a soft deformed mouth. This is due to poor nutrition and lack of calcium and vitamins; it can be reversed if caught in time.

If you are at all worried about the health of your skink you should consult your vet as soon as possible.

Some reptiles carry a naturally occurring bacteria *Salmonella* which can only be contracted by humans by ingestion. Good hygiene and washing hands after handling your skink should prevent any problems occurring.



Shopping List

Vivarium	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Substrate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Heat mat/spotlight	<input type="checkbox"/>	UV light	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thermometers x 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thermostat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water bowl	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food bowl	<input type="checkbox"/>
Live foods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Calcium supplement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vitamin supplement	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cage furnishings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pet safe disinfectant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deodorizer	<input type="checkbox"/>
A good book that covers skinks	<input type="checkbox"/>		

This leaflet is produced by the Pet Care Trust, the national charity that promotes the benefits of pet ownership and education. For more information, go to www.petcare.org.uk, or phone 01234 273933.



Remember you must never release your pet into the wild.



CARING FOR YOUR SKINK

There are many species of skink. The Berber and Blue-tongued are amongst the more commonly kept species. Berber skinks originate from Northern Africa. Blue tongued skinks originate from Australia, New Guinea and parts of Indonesia.

Berber Skinks are representative of sun-loving species whilst Blue-tongues are often found in more semi-forested habitats as well as grasslands and semi-deserts but they equally greatly enjoy sun-bathing.

They are usually very docile and make good pets. Berber skinks adults can reach sizes of 20-30cm. Blue tongued skinks can reach sizes in excess of 50cm.

Adult males can be territorial and should not normally be kept together.

Average life span is 15 years.





Housing

An escape proof wooden vivarium with a glass front and fitted air vents is the most suitable, although all glass vivaria can be utilized. The minimum size should be 90x60x60cm, preferably larger.

All reptiles are cold blooded and need an external heat source to maintain their body temperature. Each species of lizard require different degrees of heating, but all lizards benefit from a range of temperatures within the vivarium. One end of the vivarium should have extra heating, this creates a thermo gradient allowing the lizard to choose its preferred temperature. Thermometers should be placed at each end of the vivarium to monitor the temperature. The overall vivarium temperature should be controlled by a thermostat.

Wire mesh guards should be fitted over all heat sources used in order to prevent thermal burns.

Temperature

Heat can be provided by using underfloor heat mats and spot lights. Your pet shop will advise on suitable products. Create a thermal gradient of 25°C at the cool end and around 40°C at the hot end for berber skinks, and 30-35°C for blue tongued skinks. Night temperature can be dropped by several degrees at both ends and such a drop in temperature will benefit the skinks.

Lighting

Skinks are diurnal lizards and require UV lighting to fully absorb and utilize the calcium in their diet. This light should be left on for 10-12 hours in the day. The bulbs will need replacing from time to time and your pet shop will advise you.

Humidity

These skink species come from drier areas (other species inhabit rain forests so it is important to research the particular species' habitat requirements) and require relatively low humidity and good ventilation. Provide an area of damp substrate at the cool end or a humidity retreat box, during the shed periods.

Furnishings

The floor of the cage should be covered with a suitable substrate such as reptile bark, aspen shavings, calci-sand, deep enough for your skink to burrow in. Provide a spot light for basking and place rocks or flat tiles/slate beneath it. Provide hiding places and possibly a few branches for possible climbing though these may not be used.

– if using products like Calci-sand it is recommended that a rich source of calcium is supplied so that the animals do not ingest too much of the

substrate as a calcium source (resulting in possible gut impaction).

Cleaning

Remove droppings and uneaten food daily. Water and food bowls should be washed, dried and refilled daily. Vivariums should be completely cleaned out and disinfected with a pet safe disinfectant regularly.

Soiled substrate should be disposed of and replaced. Deodorisers can be used in the vivarium, your pet shop will advise.



Feeding and water

These skinks are omnivores and become more vegetarian as they get older. They will eat a varied diet of live insects, fruit and vegetables.

Young skinks should be fed daily with approximately a quarter of their diet made up of fruit and vegetables. Adults should be fed four to five times a week with at least half the diet made up of fruit and vegetables.

Animal protein can be supplied as crickets, mealworms, and pinkie mice. Waxworms can be fed sparingly as they have a high fat content. When feeding crickets feed a few at time, if they are eaten readily feed a couple more.

Vegetables: broccoli, carrots, courgettes, dandelion.

Fruit: apples, oranges. Fruit and vegetables should be washed and dried before feeding and cut into bite size pieces.

All food should be dusted with a vitamin and calcium supplement.

Shallow food and water bowls should be provided.



Handling

Skinks are usually very docile and rarely bite.

Movements should be slow, gentle but confident. To pick up your skink, place one hand above the shoulders and support the underside with the other hand.