



## General care

A healthy green water dragon should be bright and alert. Its body and legs muscles should appear well-formed and strong. There should be no signs of diarrhoea; this can be caused by incorrect feeding or internal parasite infestation. Nails may become overgrown and will need to be trimmed - consult your pet shop or vet.

- ❖ Mouth rot: Cheesy deposits appear in the mouth.
- ❖ Respiratory problems: signs include fluid or mucus from the nose.
- ❖ Bone disorders: signs include twisted, twitching, swollen or paralysed hind limbs and a soft or undershot jawbone. This is due to a lack of calcium and/or vitamin D<sub>3</sub>. It can be reversed if caught in time and properly treated.
- ❖ If you are at all worried about the health of your water dragon you should consult a specialist reptile vet as soon as possible.
- ❖ Some reptiles carry a form of salmonella. Salmonella is most usually contracted by ingestion. Good hygiene and washing hands after handling or cleaning your water dragon should be sufficient to prevent any risk of infection.



## Shopping List

|                                    |                                     |                            |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Vivarium                           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Pet safe disinfectant      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Heat map/spot light dome reflector | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Substrate                  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 2 thermometers/ humidity gauge     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | UVB tube/UVB Heat lamp     | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Food bowl and water bowl           | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Silver reflector for tubes | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Live feeds/vegetable foods         | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Thermostat                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Vitamin supplement                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Book on water dragons      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Deodoriser                         | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Calcium supplement         | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Book on water dragons              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Cage furnishings/branches  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
|                                    |                                     | Bath/Waterfall             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

***This leaflet is produced by the Pet Care Trust, the national charity that promotes the benefits of pet ownership and education within the pet care industry. For more information, go to [www.petcare.org.uk](http://www.petcare.org.uk), or phone 08700 624 400.***



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# CARING FOR YOUR WATER DRAGON

Water dragons originate from the humid tropical rainforests of South East Asia.

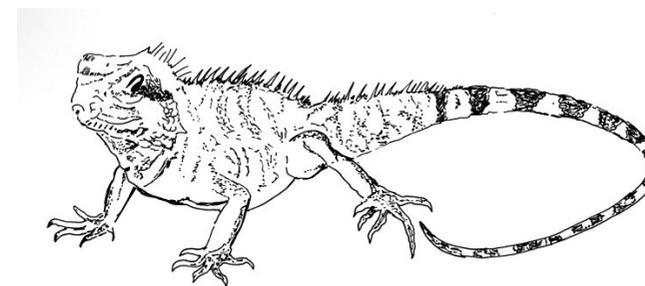
They are a semi-aquatic species of lizard that love to climb.

They can become tame and then make good pets.

Adults can reach sizes up to 90 cm, including tail.

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

**Average life span 10-20 years.**





## Housing

An escape-proof wooden vivarium with good ventilation and a wire meshed glass front is the most suitable. These lizards do not always realize that clear glass is a barrier, and many damage their snouts by constant rubbing. The minimum size should be 90 x 120 x 60cm.

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

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

**Temperature** - Gentle heat can be provided by using heat mats and more intense heat by spot lights or UV heat lamps. Your pet shop will advise on heating products and their use suitable for your water dragon. Create a thermal gradient of 26°C at the cool end and 33°C at the hot end. Night temperatures can be the same or can be dropped by a couple of degrees at both ends.

**Lighting** - Water dragons are diurnal lizards and require shade equivalent UVB lighting to fully absorb and utilize the calcium in their diet. This light should be left on for 12-14 hours in the day. The bulbs will need replacing from time to time and your pet shop will advise you.

**Humidity** - Water dragons require a high humidity of 65-85 %. This can be achieved by spraying the vivarium frequently with tepid water, or by installing a waterfall.

**Furnishings** - The floor of the cage should be covered with a suitable substrate, such as a mixture of coconut bark and coconut soil, to maintain high humidity. Provide a spot light or UV heat lamp for basking. Use branches to create areas for basking, climbing and shade. Provide a shelter for shade and to prevent stress if your lizard wants to hide away. Water dragons love to swim, so a large bath should be provided for swimming, or at least for the water dragon to soak its whole body.

**Cleaning and watering** - Remove droppings, frequently produced in the bath, and uneaten food daily. Baths, water and food bowls should be washed and cleaned 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



Water dragons mainly eat live insects, of a size up to the width of their heads, but some will accept fruit and vegetables if offered. Young water dragons should be fed insects up to twice a day with occasional fruit and vegetables. Once growth slows, appetite crashes. Adults can then be fed 3-4 times a week with more fruit and vegetables offered, if accepted.

Animal protein can be supplied as crickets, locusts, giant mealworms, and pinkie mice. Wax worms should be fed sparingly as they have a high fat content. When feeding crickets feed a few at time; if they are eaten readily you can feed a few more. Loose, uneaten crickets annoy and distress them.

Fruit and vegetables should be washed and dried before being offered in bite size pieces.

**All food can be dusted with a vitamin and calcium supplement for fast growing juveniles, and occasionally for adults.**



## Handling

Water dragons are easily tamed and then rarely bite. Movements to pick them up should be slow, gentle but confident. To pick up your lizard place one hand above the shoulders and support the underside fully with the other hand.