Tegus are large bodied lizard that occur from all over the continent of South America. These amazing creatures vary greatly in size, color, and temperament depending on care, maintenance, species, locality, and morph. Be sure to do your research on whether these animals are right for you BEFORE purchasing. Tegus are considered a very hearty reptile, however proper care and diet are essential. Tegus, especially when raised from a baby can make some of the best reptile pets. Temperament and demeanor when first shipped as babies can sometimes be a little skittish, but with proper handling will become quite docile and tame. Please note that the following care recommendations are based on over 20 years of working with and breeding these awesome animals. This care sheet certainly does not cover the vast array of tegu information (good or bad) out there, and is only meant to serve as a general guide and will greatly vary depending upon your location and home environment. If you have any other questions feel free to contact us by email at info@undergroundreptiles.com or by calling us at 954-428-8005.

Size

The varying localities and species of tegus generally range from 2’ to 4.5’ in length. Generally speaking, the Blue Tegus tend to stay the smallest while the Giant Chacoan Whiteheads and the Paraguayan Red & Whites get the largest. Also, females tend to be significantly smaller than males, although not always.

Longevity

Tegus will generally live 15 to 20 years in captivity.

Housing

Babies can be started off in a 20 to 30 gallon tank or something of similar size. However, the smaller the tank you start in, the faster your tegu will outgrow it. These animals do not stay the size of their enclosure – they will outgrow it. A single adult can be housed in a 3’x2’x2’ enclosure and pairs can be housed in a 4’x4’x4’ cage. putting them in a larger enclosure is always a great idea but we do not recommend anything smaller. Bedding should consist of either orchid bark, cypress mulch, or a mixture of the two. Be sure the substrate you use is not treated with any harsh chemicals and is considered reptile safe. Substrate should be thick enough so your tegu can bury itself and feel covered. 24” deep will generally do the trick. A large enough hide for
your tegu to retreat and hide under should always be provided. Any other decor is strictly up to the individual owner, but again should be safe for the tegu.

**Lighting, Humidity, & Hydration**

The most important thing to remember about lighting & heating is to first invest in a good digital or infrared thermometer. Many people make the mistake of assuming one bulb fits all. This is not the case since in-house or general climate varies across the world. We recommend overhead lighting as a means to attain proper temps. Your tegu’s basking area should range from 95 to 105 degrees with the ambient temperature in the mid to low 80’s during the day. Lighting should be on for about 8 to 12 hours a day and turned off in the evening. This should allow your night-time temperatures to drop into mid to low 70’s. If your temperatures go below 70 degrees we recommend a low wattage night-time source of heat to help keep the temperatures in a safe range. Another essential element to your tegu’s lighting is a good source of UVB light. This light source can be in combination to your heat source or separate. UVB helps your tegu to process and absorb calcium and other essential vitamins and minerals. Without it, serious health issues can and will arise. Humidity is ideally kept around 75%. This can be achieved through misting, proper substrate, and also soaking the substrate weekly. Tegus can experience serious shedding issues if the humidity is not kept at a proper range. When tegus are shedding, we recommend to increase your misting or soaking of it. Another common mistake is sacrificing proper ventilation for higher humidity. Simply covering up and cutting off circulation in the enclosure can leave to other issues like bacterial and fungal infections. A large water dish with fresh, clean water should always be available to your tegu.

**Diet & Nutrition**

Tegus are generally considered omnivores with the bulk of their diet consisting of insects and animal protein. We will generally start our babies on high insect diet. This consists of crickets, superworms, hornworms, and roaches. Babies are also offered chicken hearts and gizzards (cut up), fish, and ground turkey (sparingly). The occasional small pieces of fruit are also mixed in to their meals. Citrus fruits should be avoided. Certain canned and prepackaged “omnivore” diets can also be provided sparingly. Rodents are generally offered to all tegus about twice weekly. With baby tegus, pinky mice are generally cut up into small bites. Frozen/thawed rodents are sufficient for feeding as live ones can injure and or scar your tegu. As your tegu matures, large rodents and insects can be substituted for smaller ones. Baby tegus will usually eat daily while large adults will generally eat about three times a week but as with almost all reptiles more frequent feeding will greatly increase the speed at which your reptile grows. Vitamin and mineral dusting is essential, especially for babies. Tegus can develop serious nutritional deficiencies quite rapidly if proper vitamins and minerals are not offered. Calcium with D3 (high) should be offered with every non-whole prey meal and a good multivitamin should be offered once to twice weekly. Nothing caught outside or unhealthy for your tegu should ever be offered. Tegus will
generally eat first and suffer later, meaning they rarely will not try to eat something they can fit in their mouth.

With proper care your tegu from Underground Reptiles can give you decades of enjoyment!