herpy

AGAMAS

Thorny Devil

Moloch horridus

Moloch horridus is a small desert agama from inland Australia, covered in cone-shaped spines from snout to tail tip. It feeds almost exclusively on ants, drinks by drawing moisture up through its skin and walks with a characteristic rocking gait. The species is so specialised that it is almost never kept, and little is known about its care.

Family: Agamidae Former name: *Acanthosaurus gibbosus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-21 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**30-90 g**
Lifespan	**6-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-35 °C**
Basking spot	**38-45 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-20 °C**
Humidity	**10-30%**
Water	**No water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**3-10 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**90-132 days** at 27-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about the care of *Moloch horridus*, and the species is not suited to private keeping. The reason is its food: the animal eats almost exclusively ants and needs large quantities every day.
TEMPERATURE	By day the temperature should be 25-35 °C with a basking spot of 38-45 °C, measured as surface temperature with an infrared thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Air humidity should be low, 10-30 %, but the animal must be able to take in moisture through its skin.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Moloch horridus* is diurnal and lives in full sunlight, so it needs strong light and UVB corresponding to Ferguson zone 3, for example a T5 HO tube of 10-12 %.
FEEDING	*Moloch horridus* eats almost exclusively ants, especially of the genera *Iridomyrmex* and *Crematogaster*.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Moloch horridus* is calm, slow and not aggressive. It walks with a characteristic jerky gait, rocking from side to side and often standing completely still in mid-step with one foot raised.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.