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IGUANAS

Round-tailed Horned Lizard

Phrynosoma modestum

Phrynosoma modestum is one of the smallest horned lizards: a short, round, grey or brown lizard of up to 7 cm from snout to vent, living on rocky, dry terrain in the south-western USA and northern Mexico. It feeds mainly on ants, and the diet in particular makes the species extremely difficult to keep in captivity. Its care is almost undocumented.

Family: Phrynosomatidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**7 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**7-9 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**80 × 40 × 35 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**27-29 °C**
Basking spot	**38-42 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**20-40%**
Water	**No water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**6-19 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**40-61 days** at 27-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Very little is known about the care of *Phrynosoma modestum*. The care advice is therefore based on its habitat (dry, rocky terrain with strong sun) and on the closely related and better-known *Phrynosoma cornutum*.
TEMPERATURE	The species is a sun lover and needs a basking spot where the surface reaches 38-42 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be low, 20-40 %, and the enclosure should dry out completely during the day. The substrate must not be wet. The figure is borrowed from *Phrynosoma cornutum*. The species hardly drinks from a bowl.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and spends the day in open sunlight, so it needs strong light and UVB all year. Use a UVB tube (Ferguson zone 3, T5 HO 10-14 %) or a combined UVB metal halide lamp above the basking spot.
FEEDING	Food is the decisive limitation, and it is what makes the species an animal for experts. In the wild, ants are the staple food, especially harvester ants and honeypot ants, supplemented with termites, beetles and larvae.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Phrynosoma modestum* is quiet and calm and lives alone. It makes little fuss and is easy to overlook, because it blends into the ground. It is easily stressed, and if caught it inflates itself and jabs with its horns.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Mexico.