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IGUANAS

Desert horned lizard

Phrynosoma platyrhinos

Phrynosoma platyrhinos is a broad, flattened horned lizard from the deserts of the western USA and north-western Mexico. It reaches 7-10 cm from snout to vent, is diurnal and burrows into loose sand. It feeds mostly on ants, and it is precisely this diet that makes it one of the most difficult lizards to keep in an enclosure. There is little knowledge of how it should be cared for.

Family: Phrynosomatidae Former name: *Anota calidiarum; Doliosaurus platyrhinos*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**7-10 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**7-9 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**100 × 50 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**27-30 °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	**2-16 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	There is little knowledge about the care of *Phrynosoma platyrhinos*. Care is therefore based on the habitat: open, hot sandy flats, loose substrate, strong sun and a diet of ants.
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 species hardly ever drinks from a dish, but licks droplets from stones and plants.
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 over the basking spot.
FEEDING	Food is the decisive limitation. In the wild, ants make up roughly half to four fifths of the diet, and the species eats large quantities. The rest is beetles, crickets, grasshoppers and flies.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Phrynosoma platyrhinos* is calm and lives alone. It does not make much fuss and is easy to overlook, because it blends into the ground. It moves in short bursts and stops again.
NATIVE RANGE	United States and Mexico.