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LACERTIDS

Gallot's Lizard

Gallotia galloti

Gallotia galloti is a robust, diurnal lizard from Tenerife and La Palma. The males are black on the head and forebody with blue cheeks and flanks and grow to 44 cm. The species eats both insects and fruit, is shy and very aggressive towards its own kind, and is best kept as a pair in a large, sunny enclosure or an outdoor run.

Family: Lacertidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**30-44 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Rock-dwelling and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**100 × 70 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**25-31 °C**
Basking spot	**35-45 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-21 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**12-15 °C** 8-12 weeks
Diet	**Insects, fruit and plants**
Kept	**In pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24-36 months**
Clutch size	**2-9 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**44-90 days** at 28-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix III**
EU annex	**Annex C**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

About the species

Gallotia galloti is the largest of the Canarian lizards on Tenerife and La Palma. The body is robust, the head broad and the eyes large with an orange-red iris. The males grow to 44 cm in total and up to 14 cm from snout to vent, but almost no adult has an intact tail, so most measure less. The females are distinctly smaller than the males. In the males the head and forebody are black, the back is yellowish green with dark crossbands, and the cheeks and flanks have bright blue spots. Females and young are grey to brown with pale longitudinal stripes or narrow crossbands and a dark V-shaped marking, open towards the rear, on the pale throat. Many old males look so much like females that they can only be recognised at close range.

The pattern varies between the islands and between the regions of Tenerife: males from the north and north-east have blue cheeks and distinct yellow crossbands, males from the centre and south are darker and almost black with large blue spots on the flanks, and males from La Palma have blue cheeks and throat. The animals in the trade can belong to different forms, so it

is an advantage to know the origin.

The species is fast, wary and very shy, and animals in an indoor enclosure rarely show themselves when people are nearby. Towards each other they are extremely aggressive. Adult males are territorial, and even a pair can end with the weaker animal, usually the female, being bitten to death if there is not enough space and cover. The animals make squeaking sounds when they dig and chase each other. A pair that works can be kept together for many years. Lifespan is not documented; 8-12 years is an estimate based on lizards of the same size.

Distribution and habitat

Gallotia galloti lives on Tenerife and La Palma in the Canary Islands and on the rocky islet of Roque de Fuera, one of the Roques de Anaga, off the north-east coast of Tenerife. The species does not occur naturally on El Hierro and La Gomera. Records from Madeira are not counted.

On Tenerife there are two main forms: a northern one, which lives in the moister north and north-east, and a southern one in the centre and south. La Palma has a form of its own. The species ranges from the coast high into the mountains, and animals have been seen up to 3,700 m.

> **Native range:** Spain.

HABITAT

Gallotia galloti lives in open, sunny places with plenty of cover: stone walls, rock piles, volcanic rock faces, scrub, vineyards and plantations. The species is numerous, quickly settles in new, man-made habitats and is even seen in towns and cities. On the northern side of Tenerife it ranges from the coast to about 1,000 m, where the trade-wind clouds begin; laurel forest and very dense pine forest are largely avoided.

The animals are diurnal and forage on the ground and in the scrub. Each male holds a territory and likes to sit on a high rock, where it is visible from a distance. The mating season lasts from March to July, and the eggs are laid during spring and summer. The species is active all year, but individual animals take rest periods when it is cold.

The diet is mixed: arthropods, snails and carrion, but also a large proportion of fruit, flowers and leaves. Fruit is an important part of the adults' diet, and many Canarian plants have their seeds dispersed by the lizards. Young animals take mainly invertebrates.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

Gallotia galloti digs and moves mostly on the ground, so floor area matters more than height. A pair needs an enclosure of at least 100 × 70 × 60 cm (length × width × height), corresponding to about 0.7 m² of floor area. Larger is better, and an outdoor enclosure or run in full sun is the best solution in summer, because outdoors the animals often become far less shy. In the cold part of the year they must be indoors.

The substrate must be deep enough to dig in: a mixture of soil, sand and decomposed leaf litter in a layer of 10-15 cm, kept slightly moist, with leaf litter as the top layer so that the moisture does not evaporate. Keep part of the substrate dry. Offer pieces of bark, flat stones, rock piles and root pieces as hides and basking spots, and dense planting that can withstand some wear and tear. There must be many hiding places at both ends, so that a subordinate female can retreat.

Keep only one pair in an enclosure. Several males can never live together, and in groups the animals bite each other, and the females lay few or no eggs and only 1-2 per clutch. One male with two females is possible in a large enclosure with plenty of cover, but a pair is safest. For egg-laying, provide a dish of slightly moist peat and sand mixture about 14 cm in diameter and 9 cm high, partly covered by a piece of broken flowerpot. The female will then not dig in random places.

TEMPERATURE

Gallotia galloti loves the sun and must be able to warm up. The daytime temperature in the enclosure is 25-31 °C, and a spotlight over a flat stone gives a surface temperature of 35-45 °C. Active animals in the wild maintain a body temperature of 32-34 °C. At night the temperature drops to 15-21 °C, and night-time heating is not necessary.

A cool brumation of 8-12 weeks at 12-15 °C with the heat lamps switched off and shorter days suits the species and promotes reproduction, typically from mid-December to mid-February. The appetite declines on its own in autumn, and feeding is stopped a couple of weeks before the rest period, so that the gut is empty. Only healthy, well-nourished animals may be brumated, and they must be free of mites and internal parasites. After the rest period the temperature and day length rise gradually, and the animals begin to eat within a few days.

Read more: Brumation and the seasons

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The humidity should be 40-60 %. The enclosure must have good ventilation, and part of the substrate must be dry. The substrate is kept slightly moist, not wet, so that the leaf litter keeps holding the moisture.

The animals drink every day. Provide a shallow dish of fresh water, changed daily. After brumation the animals drink a lot before they begin to eat.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

LIGHTING AND UVB

Gallotia galloti is diurnal and basks for several hours, so the enclosure needs strong light and UVB. Indoors, use a T5 tube for Ferguson zone 3 over the basking spot, so that the animal gets a UV index of 3-5 at head height; the distance is determined with a UV meter. Glass blocks UVB, so the tube must be inside the enclosure or in an open part of the lid. Outdoors the UVB comes from the sun.

The day length naturally follows the season: 12-14 hours in summer and about 8 hours during brumation. The spotlight is switched on for 5-7 hours in the middle of the day. Replace the UVB tube according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Read more: Lighting and UVB Read more: Heat and temperature

FEEDING

Gallotia galloti is omnivorous, and a large part of the adults' diet is plant food. Offer fruit such as banana, melon, figs, tomato and berries, flowers and leaves, soaked seeds and raw vegetables. Too much of it leads to obesity and dental problems. Give fruit as part of the meal, not as the whole meal.

In addition the animals are given insects: crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches, mealworms, fly larvae and earthworms. The young take mostly insects. The animals also take soaked cat food in small amounts, but it is not necessary. Dust the food with calcium, and regularly give a vitamin supplement with D3 unless the animal has UVB. Vitamins and calcium can also be given in the drinking water according to the manufacturer's dosage. Feed every other day, as much as the animal eats in a few minutes. Young are fed daily.

Read more: Feeder animals: keeping and breeding Read more: Calcium, vitamins and supplements

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Gallotia galloti is shy and alert, and the animals keep fleeing wildly when anyone enters the room. Outdoors in a run they become more confident and can sometimes eat from the hand. Avoid grabbing the animal; the tail is dropped when stressed and grows back without new vertebrae.

The males are fiercely territorial and threaten by displaying their blue sides. A pair lives peacefully as long as there are many hides, but the female is attacked at times. Check the female for wounds, and separate the animals if the attacks are repeated. Mating takes place with a bite on the nape, not on the flank as in many other lizards. The species should not be shared with other species.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

The males are larger than the females and have a more powerful head and blue cheeks and flanks. Females and young have a dark V-shaped marking on the pale throat. In young animals the sex can only be determined reliably once they are somewhat older. The animals become sexually mature after two to three years.

MATING

The mating season lasts from March to July. After brumation the male wakes first. The male bites the female on the nape during mating, and the pair do not stay together beyond mating. Watch the animals for the first few days, and separate them if the female gets wounds.

EGG-LAYING AND CLUTCHES

The female lays eggs between April and August, 1-2 clutches a year. The first clutch has an average of 4-5 eggs (2-9), and the second about 3 (2-6). In groups of females and in enclosures that are too small the clutches become smaller. The eggs are about 19 × 13 mm and grow during development. Put in a dish of slightly moist peat and sand as a laying site, and check it daily during the period. The female may eat the eggs if she does not have a suitable place.

INCUBATION

The eggs are removed as soon as they are laid and placed in an incubation box with a slightly moist mixture of peat and sand without being turned. The incubation time depends on the temperature and how stable it is, and is 44-90 days. At a stable 28-31 °C the eggs hatch after 63-68 days, and with 34 °C by day and 18 °C at night after 62-89 days. Newly hatched young are 12-15 cm in total, of which about 4 cm is body.

Read more: Incubating eggs

REARING THE YOUNG

The young are aggressive towards each other and must be reared separately from the first days, otherwise they are bitten and may die. The adults also readily eat young. Feed small insects daily, dusted with calcium, and provide light and UVB as for adults. The shyest animals do best in an enclosure with many hides, where they can be undisturbed.

Health and common mistakes

Most problems are caused by too little heat, too little UVB, a one-sided diet and too little space. The typical ones are:

- Metabolic bone disease from too little UVB and calcium. Provide UVB or sun, and dust the food.
- Obesity and dental problems from too much fruit. Keep fruit to a smaller part of the diet.
- Mites and internal parasites in new animals. New animals are quarantined and examined, and a faecal sample is taken before brumation.
- Wounds from fights and bites. Separate the animals if there are wounds.
- Loss of the tail. It grows back, but without new vertebrae.
- Problems during brumation in thin or sick animals. If the animal is sick or underweight, it must not be brumated.
- Egg-laying difficulties without a suitable laying site. The female is restless and digs; see a vet if she is weak.

A healthy animal has clear eyes, a plump tail, smooth skin and a good appetite. See a vet with reptile experience if the animal does not eat, loses weight or breathes with its mouth open.

Read more: Common diseases and signs of illness

Always ask someone who knows

This guide is a good place to start, but it cannot replace experience. Animals differ, and much of what matters most is learned from people who have kept the species for years. Talk to a breeder, an experienced keeper or a vet who knows reptiles and amphibians before you get the animal - and again if anything looks wrong.