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LACERTIDS

Red Tegu

Salvator rufescens

Salvator rufescens is the most heavily built tegu: a diurnal, burrowing lizard from the dry Chaco and western Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia, which becomes redder with age. Males grow to 140 cm. The species needs a purpose-built enclosure of at least 300 × 150 × 150 cm, a deep burrowing substrate, strong heat and UVB, and it lives for 15-20 years.

Family: Teiidae Former name: *Tupinambis rufescens*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**80-140 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**15-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and dry forest**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**300 × 150 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-35 °C**
Basking spot	**52-57 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-23 °C**
Humidity	**70-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**15-20 °C** 17-22 weeks
Diet	**Insects, fruit, plants, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**24-36 months**
Clutch size	**15-35 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**40-75 days** at 29-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little specific knowledge exists about the care of *Salvator rufescens*.
TEMPERATURE	The basking spot should have a surface temperature of 52-57 °C, measured with an infrared thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Air humidity should be 70-80 %, as for the other Argentine tegus. Keep the substrate damp but not muddy by watering it weekly, and mist daily.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Salvator rufescens* is diurnal and needs strong light and UVB for 12-14 hours a day.
FEEDING	*Salvator rufescens* is an omnivore with an emphasis on animal food. Juveniles and animals raised in captivity can be fussy and often prefer meat.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Salvator rufescens* has a reputation for being calm and relatively tame and can be trained. Tameness does not come by itself: the animal must be handled calmly and regularly from a young age, and juveniles are shy.
NATIVE RANGE	Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia.