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SKINKS

Burrowing Sand Skink

Scincus scincus

A small, smooth, golden-brown skink that swims through loose desert sand with undulating movements. *Scincus scincus* spends most of its life a few centimetres below the surface of the sand, finds its prey by vibrations and needs a deep layer of clean sand, heat and dry conditions.

Family: Scincidae Former name: *Scincus officinalis* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-20 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-18 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**80 × 50 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**28-35 °C**
Basking spot	**38-42 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**20-40%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**2-10 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**50-70 days** at 27-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
The sand is the most important part of the setup. The species digs and swims in the sand all day, so the substrate must be a deep layer of clean, fine, rounded sand of 10-15 cm.

TEMPERATURE
The daytime temperature in the enclosure must be 28-35 °C, and at night it may fall to 20-24 °C. The enclosure needs a clear gradient with a warm basking spot under a spotlight and a cooler area at the other end.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
The species comes from the desert and must be kept dry, with a humidity of 20-40 %. The sand must not be damp, because moisture promotes fungus and skin problems, and good ventilation is important.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species lives in bright sunshine, so the enclosure needs strong light for 10-12 hours a day.

FEEDING
In the wild *Scincus scincus* eats mainly insects and arachnids, but plant matter is also included. Give, for example, crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches and mealworms, and choose prey no larger than the animal's head.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
The species is an animal to watch, not to handle. It is fast and shy, and touch stresses it. If an animal has to be moved, it can be carefully sifted up out of the sand or lured into a small container of sand.

NATIVE RANGE
Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.