

Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Cachryx defensor - Yucatan spinytail iguana

Identity and habitat

Current taxonomy places the Yucatan lineage in Cachryx, separate from Ctenosaura. C. defensor occurs across the Yucatan Peninsula and northern Guatemala, mainly in seasonally dry tropical forest, thorn scrub and limestone terrain, using rock holes and tight hollow-tree cavities as refuges.

Climate and seasonality

The northern Yucatan has a pronounced dry season from roughly November-May and a wet season from late May/June-October. Atmospheric humidity remains moderate even during the dry season. Reproductive stimulation in captivity is best tied to this dry-to-wet seasonal contrast rather than to cold winter cooling.

Reproduction and diet

Oviparous with very small clutches. Field work historically reported 2-3 eggs; a 2024 wild nest contained three freshly laid eggs on 22 March inside a hollow tree trunk. Captive-breeding reviews give 2-8 eggs. Wild feces indicate a predominantly leaf-based diet, with flowers/shoots and occasional invertebrates.

MONTH	DAY AMBIENT	NIGHT	BASKING	UVI*	PHOTO	RH DAY / NIGHT*	SPRAY / RAIN	FOOD*	STATUS / BREEDING
January	24-27 C	19-21 C	36-38 C	3	11 h 10 m	55-65 / 65-80%	Light local spray 1-2x/wk	3-4	Dry season / courtship
February	25-28 C	19-22 C	37-39 C	3-4	11 h 30 m	50-65 / 65-80%	Light local spray 1-2x/wk	3-4	Mating / gravid development
March	27-30 C	20-23 C	38-40 C	3-4	12 h	50-65 / 65-80%	Minimal main cage + moist nest cavity	4	Main laying window
April	28-31 C	21-24 C	38-40 C	3-4	12 h 30 m	50-65 / 65-80%	Light local spray 1-2x/wk	4	Incubation / late laying possible
May	29-32 C	22-24 C	39-40 C	4	13 h	55-70 / 70-85%	2-3 light rain events/wk	4	Pre-rains / incubation
June	28-31 C	22-24 C	38-40 C	4	13 h 15 m	65-80 / 80-90%	4-5 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Wet season / hatching likely
July	28-31 C	22-24 C	38-40 C	4	13 h	65-80 / 80-90%	4-5 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Wet-season activity
August	28-31 C	22-24 C	38-40 C	4	12 h 40 m	65-80 / 80-90%	4-5 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Wet-season activity
September	27-30 C	22-24 C	38-40 C	3-4	12 h 10 m	68-80 / 80-90%	4-5 rain/mist events/wk	4-5	Peak rains
October	26-29 C	21-23 C	37-39 C	3-4	11 h 40 m	65-78 / 78-88%	3-4 rain/mist events/wk	4	Late wet season
November	25-28 C	20-22 C	36-39 C	3	11 h 15 m	60-70 / 70-82%	Light local spray 1-2x/wk	3-4	Dry-down begins
December	24-27 C	19-21 C	36-38 C	3	11 h	55-65 / 65-80%	Light local spray 1-2x/wk	3-4	Dry season / conditioning

Seasonal trigger: the most useful published captive guidance is extensive spraying during June-October and a markedly drier period from November-May. This schedule follows that pattern while retaining moderate atmospheric RH.

* RH, UVI and spray values are captive working targets. Yucatan air can remain humid even in the dry season; the distinction is rainfall frequency and surface moisture, not 'desert-dry' air.

Nest warning: a natural March clutch was deposited inside a hollow tree trunk on decomposed wood debris. Always offer a warm humid cavity-style nest as well as a diggable moist pocket.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

Compact Yucatan iguana husbandry: limestone and hollow refuges, moderate-high humidity, strong ventilation, plant-dominant diet and seasonal summer rains.

Enclosure and refuge design

For one adult, around 120 x 70 x 80 cm or larger is a practical starting point. Provide extensive limestone-style rockwork, tight crevices, hollow cork or dead-wood tubes, elevated branches and several narrow retreats only slightly wider than the animal. Support heavy rock from the enclosure base.

Heat, gradient and UVB

Use general day temperatures around the mid-to-upper 20s C with a local basking surface around 36-40 C. Keep a shaded retreat around 24-26 C and avoid uniformly hot air. A measured basking UVI around 3-4 is a practical target, with deep cavities below UVI 1.

RH, rain and ventilation

Dry-season daytime RH can remain around 50-65% with a nighttime rise, while exposed surfaces stay mostly dry. From June-October increase rainfall/misting substantially and allow night RH into the 80-90% range. Maintain strong cross-ventilation and allow exposed surfaces to dry between rain events.

Nest provision

Offer two nest styles from February onward: (1) a warm hollow-log/cork cavity with decomposed wood, leaf litter and a slightly moist base, and (2) a small diggable soil-sand pocket kept moist below the surface. The 2024 wild nest was approximately 1 m above ground inside a hollow trunk.

Diet

Field fecal analysis indicates predominantly folivorous feeding. Base the adult diet on varied dark leafy greens, edible browse, flowers and tender shoots, with controlled fruit and only occasional invertebrates. Do not copy the insect-heavy juvenile schedule used for some large *Ctenosaura* unless direct feeding response supports it.

Seasonal feeding

Maintain good body condition through the dry breeding season without obesity. Increase calcium-rich greens and browse during follicular development and gravidity. After laying, rebuild female condition during the onset of the rainy season when feeding activity typically rises.

Social management

Detailed social biology is limited and the species can be shy and refuge-dependent. Individual housing is safest outside controlled breeding. For introductions, duplicate basking and refuge sites and watch closely for repeated pursuit, bites, refuge exclusion, suppressed feeding or weight loss.

Daily keeper checks

Check alertness, eyes/nose, grip, toes/tail, feces, hydration, appetite and body mass. Inspect tight refuges for mold or stagnant moisture. During February-April, record female mass, abdominal profile, cavity use and digging daily because clutch size is small and laying signs can be subtle.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

Small clutches, cavity nesting and a dry-to-wet seasonal trigger distinguish *Cachryx defensor* from most larger *Ctenosaura*.

Wild nesting evidence

On 22 March 2022, researchers found a female *C. defensor* inside a hollow *Metopium brownei* trunk in northern Guatemala. Three freshly laid eggs rested on decayed wood debris inside the cavity about 1 m above ground. Older shell fragments in the same refuge suggest possible nest-site fidelity.

Clutch size

Historic Yucatan field observations report only 2-3 eggs, and the recent wild nest also contained three. A modern captive-breeding review broadens the known range to about 2-8 eggs per clutch. This is therefore a genuinely small-clutch species.

Captive incubation

Published general *Cachryx/Ctenosaura* summaries often cite roughly 90 days at 29-31 C. A detailed captive *C. defensor* report described seven fertile eggs incubated at 29 C that hatched after about 70 days. Use approximately 29 C as a conservative starting point and expect roughly 70-90 days until more standardized data exist.

Breeding trigger and timing

Captive-breeding guidance recommends a wetter June-October period and a significantly drier November-May period. The March wild nest strongly supports late-dry-season oviposition. January-February courtship/mating on this schedule is a working inference rather than a firmly documented fixed field window.

Evidence confidence

Taxonomy - High

Cachryx resurrected in 2017; current Reptile Database recognizes *C. defensor*.

Habitat / refuge use - High

Seasonally dry forest, limestone rock holes and hollow-tree refuges.

Diet - High-moderate

1996 field feces predominantly leaves; later accounts add flowers/shoots and occasional insects.

Wild clutch size - High

Three eggs in 2022 nest; historical reports 2-3 eggs.

Captive clutch range - Moderate-high

Modern breeding review gives 2-8 eggs.

Laying season - High-moderate

Fresh wild clutch documented 22 March; broader timing still poorly known.

Incubation - Moderate

Captive reports suggest around 70-90 d at roughly 29-31 C.

RH / spray targets - Moderate

Translated from Yucatan climate plus captive dry/wet trigger guidance.

Key references

1. Malone, Reynoso & Buckley (2017), *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution*: resurrection of *Cachryx*. 2. Kohler (1996), *Salamandra*: Yucatan field ecology, limestone refuges, leaf-dominated feces and 2-3 egg reports. 3. Gil-Escobedo et al. (2024), *Revista Latinoamericana de Herpetologia*: first wild nest, three eggs on 22 March in a hollow tree cavity. 4. BfN captive-breeding evaluation (2022): 2-8 eggs and June-October wet / November-May dry breeding trigger. 5. Captive breeding report: seven fertile eggs, about 70 d at 29 C.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Cachryx defensor

Your measuring point

Measure UVI at normal back height directly beneath the brightest accessible part of the optional T5 strip. Place the strip toward the middle/back with free access to and away from it; preserve a gradient into fully covered refuges near UVI 0. These numbers describe the exposure area, not the whole enclosure or a daily average.

Measure and adjust

- 1. Use a UV Index meter.** A Solarmeter 6.5/6.5R or equivalent UVI meter is suitable. Broadband UVB readings in microwatts/cm2 cannot be substituted for UVI.
- 2. Measure the installed arrangement.** Warm the tube for about 30 minutes. Keep the reflector, guards and mesh in their normal positions. With the animal elsewhere, hold the sensor at its normal back height, aimed toward the tube.
- 3. Adjust the fixture.** Begin near the lower part of a newly selected working range and adjust gradually. Respect the lamp manufacturer's minimum distance. Recheck after each change and check every higher accessible branch, rock or platform.
- 4. Keep a full gradient.** Provide usable exposure across the animal's body, lower-UVI areas and fully covered refuges near UVI 0. For daytime baskers, overlap the UV area with visible light and appropriate basking warmth while retaining cooler shade.
- 5. Record and recheck.** Log UVI, measuring point, tube-to-back distance, tube age and lamp-on time. Recheck through the year and after changes to the tube, reflector, mesh or furnishings. Exposure duration and behaviour also determine dose.

A T5 range is a working exposure target, not a whole-cage setting, measured wild monthly average, guaranteed optimum or proven safety ceiling. The animal must be able to enter and leave freely.

Monthly target at normal back height

Month	UVI under T5 when on
January	3
February	3-4
March	3-4
April	3-4
May	4
June	4
July	4
August	4
September	3-4
October	3-4
November	3
December	3

Retain numbers; clarify measurement

The retained range remains a provisional captive working target. No new species-specific result was found that clearly requires a numerical change. Retaining it is not certification of an experimentally established optimum.

Evidence level: Provisional retention. The seasonal schedule is a captive operating plan; it is not measured wild monthly UV. Off means the existing planned UVB-off/rest phase is preserved. Any staged Off/1 entry still means gradual reintroduction.

UV references: Baines et al. (2016), UV-Tool; Muryn, Baines and Dishman (2026), Reptile Lighting Guide V10. Full rationale and monthly comparison: [UVI_Audit_Report.html](#).