

REPTILE LEGENDS - KEEPER PROTOCOL

Evidence-informed annual schedule - Yellow Banana is a captive type, not a formal taxon

Ctenosaura pectinata

Yellow Banana type - Western Spiny-tailed Iguana

The Yellow Banana form is a captive-bred yellow phenotype/line within *Ctenosaura pectinata*. It is not a formally described subspecies and there is no evidence that it requires different environmental husbandry from normally colored *C. pectinata*. This protocol therefore uses well-documented western Mexican *C. pectinata* biology, while preserving the line identity in records and the QR library.

Wild anchor Western Mexico. <i>C. pectinata</i> occupies tropical dry forest, rocky hillsides, trees and human-modified habitats; current Reptile Database range extends broadly along western Mexico.	Climate anchor Chamela dry forest has a long dry season roughly November-May and concentrated summer rain June-October. Reproduction is synchronized to this wet/dry cycle.	Breeding anchor Field work at Chamela places mating mainly January-March, nesting March-April and first hatchlings around mid-July.	Banana line "Banana" is a hobby designation for strongly yellow captive stock, including the long-established Kelly Paul line; color alone does not establish a separate taxon.
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Annual keeper schedule

Month	Day air	Night	Bask	UVI*	Light	RH day/night*	Rain / mist	Food d/wk	Seasonal management
January	27-30 C	19-21 C	43-47 C	3-4	11.0 h	45-58 / 60-72%	Dry; light AM mist 1-2x/wk	4-5	Breeding season begins; courtship/mating
February	28-31 C	20-22 C	44-48 C	4	11.5 h	44-58 / 60-72%	Dry; minimal rain, full drinking access	4-5	Peak mating; females entering vitellogenesis
March	29-31 C	21-23 C	44-48 C	4-5	12.1 h	45-60 / 62-74%	Very dry; localized humid retreat	5	Gravid females; primary nesting begins
April	30-32 C	22-24 C	44-48 C	4-5	12.6 h	46-62 / 64-76%	Dry but warming; light mist 1-2x/wk	5-6	Primary oviposition; monitor nest zone daily
May	30-32 C	23-25 C	43-47 C	4-5	13.0 h	48-65 / 67-80%	Pre-rain transition; increase occasional showers	5-6	Incubation; female recovery
June	30-32 C	23-25 C	42-46 C	4	13.2 h	55-70 / 72-84%	Rain season starts; 2-3 rain events/wk	6	Incubation; foliage and food availability rise
July	29-32 C	23-25 C	42-46 C	4	13.1 h	60-75 / 76-88%	Wet; regular rain/mist, good ventilation	6	First hatchlings / peak emergence
August	29-32 C	23-25 C	42-46 C	4	12.7 h	62-78 / 78-90%	Wet season; frequent rain pulses	6	Hatchlings abundant; adult recovery/growth
September	29-31 C	23-25 C	42-46 C	3-4	12.2 h	62-78 / 78-90%	Wet; regular rain, dry basking surfaces	6	Growth / reserve building
October	28-31 C	22-24 C	42-46 C	3-4	11.7 h	58-74 / 75-87%	Late wet season; rain gradually eases	5-6	Conditioning before dry season
November	27-30 C	20-22 C	42-46 C	3	11.2 h	50-65 / 66-78%	Dry transition; reduce rain sharply	5	Dry-season reset; males begin reproductive build-up
December	27-29 C	19-21 C	42-46 C	3	10.9 h	46-60 / 62-74%	Dry; sparse mist, strong airflow	4-5	Cooler dry phase; prepare breeders for January

* Practical captive targets. Use a large thermal gradient and measure basking surface temperature directly. RH is a working enclosure target rather than a claim about every wild microhabitat. The seasonal change in rainfall is more important than forcing extreme temperature changes.

Housing, climate and nutrition

Taxonomy and line identity

Ctenosaura pectinata (Wiegmann, 1834) is the species. "Yellow Banana" is best treated as a captive phenotype/line designation. Maintain breeder identity and pedigree because yellow coloration can occur to varying degrees in ordinary *C. pectinata* and is not by itself evidence of a distinct locality or subspecies.

Enclosure

Adults need large, strongly built enclosures with both horizontal floor space and climbing height. Provide several massive branches, rock shelves, elevated basking platforms and tight retreats. Mature males are powerful and territorial; individual housing is safest outside controlled breeding introductions.

Thermal gradient

Do not run the whole enclosure at 31-32 C. Provide warm-season general air around 29-32 C, cooler retreats in the mid-20s, and a broad basking surface around 42-48 C. Dry-season nights can safely fall toward 19-22 C in healthy acclimated adults. A real gradient is essential for digestion, sperm development and female nesting behavior.

UVB / light

Use very bright full-spectrum lighting plus strong linear UVB. A practical basking-zone target is approximately UVI 3-5, with immediate access to deep shade and UVI near zero. Combine UVB with a high-output visible-light source; do not use UVB as the only bright light.

Humidity / rain

This is a seasonally dry species, not a desert species. Keep the winter/spring breeding period relatively dry with good drinking access and a localized humid retreat. Increase rain/misting clearly from June through October, but allow basking surfaces and much of the enclosure to dry between events.

Adult diet

Adults are predominantly herbivorous. Offer calcium-rich leafy weeds and browse as the base, plus flowers, leaves, seasonal vegetables and modest fruit. Field studies show major seasonal shifts in plant parts consumed; adults can use fruit heavily when available, but captive fruit should not dominate because of energy density.

Ontogenetic diet shift

Hatchlings and small juveniles naturally consume far more insects than adults. One field study found insects made up about 86.5% of the smallest juveniles' diet by volume. Gradually increase plant material as animals grow; routine high-animal-protein feeding is inappropriate for adults.

Supplementation

Use a calcium-rich plant diet, measured plain-calcium supplementation where appropriate, and a conservative multivitamin schedule matched to UVB exposure. Gravid females need particularly strong calcium access before and after laying.

Water

Provide fresh drinking water continuously even in the dry season. Seasonal drying means less rain and lower ambient humidity, not dehydration. Large animals often drink heavily after oviposition.

Social management

Breeding introductions require observation. Head-bobbing, chasing and forceful mating are normal, but prolonged attack, cornering or food/basking exclusion is not. Separate immediately if a female cannot escape or maintain normal feeding and basking.

Yellow coloration

Do not change UVB, temperature or diet in an attempt to "force" yellow color. Preserve the phenotype through documented genetics/pedigree and normal species-appropriate husbandry; excessive carotenoid or supplement manipulation is unnecessary and potentially harmful.

Breeding, nesting, incubation and juveniles

Seasonal trigger

Use the western Mexican pattern. Reduce rainfall strongly from November, allow modestly cooler dry-season nights in December-January, then maintain intense basking and lengthening days. Courtship and mating should build during January-March while conditions are still dry.

Mating window

Chamela field data place mating between January and March. A central-Mexico reproductive study similarly places vitellogenesis and mating around January-February. Do not rely on a sudden temperature drop; the combination of the dry season, photoperiod and intact annual cycle is the stronger signal.

Nesting window

At Chamela, females were seen nesting in April and the probable nesting season was March-April. Install the nest area before the female is obviously gravid. Repeated digging, reduced basking routine and pacing can precede oviposition.

Nest box

For large females, provide a deep, stable dig zone at least about 30 cm deep and large enough for the female to turn inside. A proven *Ctenosaura* breeder method uses slightly moist topsoil/coarse sand/peat or equivalent compactable substrate that holds a tunnel without collapsing. Deeper/larger is preferable when space allows.

Clutch size

C. pectinata produces one clutch per year in the better-studied populations. Central-Mexico data found 12-52 eggs, mean about 31.1. A southern Oaxaca study reported a higher mean of about 43.8 eggs, showing substantial geographic and female-size variation. Do not use clutch count alone to judge reproductive health.

Egg handling

After laying, allow the female to finish back-filling, then excavate carefully. Mark the top surface of each egg before moving and preserve orientation. Weighing eggs at laying and during incubation is useful for detecting water-balance problems.

Incubation temperature

A conservative starting range is about 28.5-30 C. Controlled research has successfully incubated *C. pectinata* at both 29 and 32 C, but offspring incubated at 29 C showed better subsequent growth. Avoid pushing temperatures into the low 30s simply to shorten incubation.

Incubation duration

Recent Nizanda, Oaxaca work measured 67-88 days from nest completion to hatchling emergence, mean about 78.5 days. Older husbandry accounts often cite roughly 65-90 days depending on temperature and conditions. Treat duration as an outcome, not a target to accelerate.

Incubation medium

Use vermiculite or perlite in a closed or lightly ventilated container with stable, moderately high humidity and no standing water. The eggs should expand normally without remaining wet. Track container mass if using a closed-box method.

Hatching season

At Chamela the first hatchlings appeared around mid-July, coinciding with the early rainy season and increased foliage/invertebrate availability. This is an important validation that the captive annual cycle is aligned correctly.

Hatchling care

Provide smaller but still very bright enclosures, 29-32 C warm daytime air, 38-43 C basking surfaces, strong but accessible UVB, abundant cover and frequent hydration. Feed appropriately sized insects heavily at first while also offering tender flowers/leaves and gradually increasing plant dominance.

Record keeping

Record morph/pedigree, breeder weights, minimum winter night temperatures, rain/misting changes, courtship, copulation dates, pre-lay behavior, laying date, clutch size, egg mass, incubation temperature range, hatch date and hatchling color. For a captive morph line, pedigree records are as important as husbandry records.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Ctenosaura pectinata - Yellow Banana type

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	3-4
February	4
March	4-5
April	4-5
May	4-5
June	4
July	4
August	4
September	3-4
October	3-4
November	3
December	3

Refine numerical target
Use the existing standard Ctenosaura pectinata monthly UVI schedule (3-5 across the year) instead of 5-7 throughout. Yellow Banana is a captive line, not a separate species; no evidence was found requiring a higher default for this line. Other line-specific monthly settings are preserved. This remains a working husbandry schedule, not a demonstrated colour-specific UV requirement.

Evidence level: Consistency within the same species. 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](#).