

Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Gallotia stehlini - Gran Canaria giant lizard

Identity and habitat

Large endemic lacertid of Gran Canaria, Canary Islands. It occupies rocky volcanic slopes, scrub, agricultural edges, gardens and disturbed habitats from low elevations into the mountains. Adults are powerful terrestrial/rock-dwelling lizards that use burrows, rock cracks and dense cover as retreats.

Climate and annual cycle

Gran Canaria has mild winters and warm, extremely dry summers. At the airport, mean monthly temperature rises from 17.9 C in January to 24.6 C in August; rainfall falls from 25-31 mm in winter to essentially zero in June-August. Captive breeding also benefits from a distinct winter cooling period.

Diet and reproduction

Adults are overwhelmingly herbivorous: a comparative study found about 94-99% vegetal matter by dry weight, including fruit, flowers, leaves and stems. Juveniles take more invertebrates. Six-year captive data recorded June-August laying, 5-14 eggs (mean 9.8) and 75-86 day incubation.

MONTH	DAY AMBIENT	NIGHT	BASKING	UVI*	PHOTO	RH DAY / NIGHT*	SPRAY / RAIN	FOOD*	STATUS / BREEDING
January	19-22 C	14-17 C	30-33 C	2-3	10 h 30 m	55-70 / 65-80%	Light spray 1-2x/wk	2-3	Cool winter rest
February	20-23 C	14-17 C	31-34 C	2-3	11 h	55-70 / 65-80%	Light spray 1-2x/wk	2-3	Winter rest / conditioning
March	21-25 C	15-18 C	35-38 C	3-4	11 h 45 m	50-65 / 60-75%	Light spray 1-2x/wk	3-4	Warm-up / courtship begins
April	22-26 C	16-19 C	38-41 C	4	12 h 30 m	45-60 / 55-70%	Light spray 1x/wk	4	Courtship / mating
May	24-28 C	17-20 C	40-43 C	4-5	13 h 15 m	40-55 / 50-65%	Minimal spray	4-5	Peak mating / vitellogenesis
June	25-29 C	18-21 C	41-44 C	4-5	13 h 45 m	40-55 / 50-65%	Minimal; moist nest only	4-5	Oviposition begins
July	26-30 C	19-22 C	42-45 C	5	14 h	40-55 / 50-65%	Minimal; water always	4-5	Main laying / incubation
August	26-30 C	20-22 C	42-45 C	5	13 h 30 m	40-55 / 50-65%	Minimal; water always	4	Late laying / hatching
September	25-29 C	19-22 C	40-43 C	4-5	12 h 45 m	45-60 / 55-70%	Light spray 1x/wk	4	Hatching / recovery
October	23-27 C	18-21 C	38-41 C	4	11 h 45 m	50-65 / 60-75%	Light spray 1-2x/wk	3-4	Autumn taper
November	21-24 C	16-19 C	34-37 C	3	10 h 45 m	55-70 / 65-80%	Light spray 2x/wk	3	Cooling / reduced activity
December	19-22 C	14-17 C	30-33 C	2-3	10 h 15 m	55-70 / 65-80%	Light spray 1-2x/wk	2-3	Cool winter rest

Calendar: Gran Canaria and the Netherlands are both in the Northern Hemisphere, so the native seasonal sequence is retained. This is a mild winter cooling, not deep hibernation.

* RH, UVI and spray values are captive working targets. Gran Canaria coastal RH remains moderate even when rainfall is almost absent; summer should therefore be dry at the surface but not artificially desiccating.

Thermal rule: maintain a very hot local basking surface in spring/summer but always provide a true cool retreat and moist refuge. Do not heat the whole enclosure into the 30s.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

Large herbivorous lacertid husbandry: strong heat gradient, intense UVB, deep retreats, dry summer surfaces and a substantial plant-based diet.

Enclosure and structure

Adults are large, strong and highly active. For one adult, about 180 x 80 x 80 cm or larger is a practical starting point; breeding pairs benefit from substantially more floor area. Provide heavy rock slabs fixed safely from the base, broad basking shelves, low sturdy branches, deep hides and multiple visual barriers.

Heat, gradient and UVB

Use a broad thermal gradient. Summer basking surfaces around 40-45 C are appropriate, while the cool retreat should remain around the mid-20s C. Winter basking can be reduced substantially. A measured basking UVI around 4-5 is a practical active-season target, falling to about 2-3 during the winter rest.

Humidity, rainfall and retreats

Summer air does not need to be bone-dry even though rainfall is virtually absent. Keep exposed substrate dry and well ventilated, but maintain one slightly humid retreat or deep burrow zone. In autumn/winter, modestly increase localized spraying to reflect the island's wetter season.

Nest provision

Provide a deep warm lay area by May. Use at least 30-40 cm of diggable soil/sand mix, ideally deeper for a large female, with a lightly moist lower layer that holds a tunnel. Females often test-dig before selecting a final site. Keep the lay zone available through August.

Adult diet

Base the adult diet on varied leafy greens, edible weeds, flowers, browse and controlled fruit. Field data show a strongly plant-dominant diet. Offer invertebrates only as a small supplement: snails, roaches, crickets or other appropriate prey. Avoid making animal protein a major adult calorie source.

Juvenile diet

Juveniles are more insectivorous than adults. Offer frequent appropriately sized gut-loaded insects together with greens, flowers and small pieces of fruit from the beginning. Shift progressively toward the strongly plant-dominant adult diet as growth continues.

Social management

These lizards can be less overtly aggressive than some large lacertids, but adult males are powerful and competition can be severe. Keep multiple basking and feeding stations. Separate immediately for sustained chasing, biting, exclusion from retreats or feeding, or falling body mass.

Daily keeper checks

Check alertness, gait, toes/claws, eyes/nose, mouth, tail, feces, appetite and body condition. Large adults can become obese on rich fruit or excessive animal protein. During breeding, monitor female mass, abdominal contour, test digging and calcium intake closely.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

Captive breeding is well documented: late-spring mating, summer laying and approximately 80-day incubation are strongly supported.

Reproductive timing

Captive reports describe mating in late spring to early summer. The strongest multi-year breeding dataset followed one pair for six years and recorded oviposition between June and August every year. A winter cooling period is widely used by successful keepers before spring courtship.

Clutch size

The six-year breeding study recorded one clutch annually with a mean of 9.8 eggs and a range of 5-14. Other experienced captive reports describe 8-25 eggs and occasional second clutches about eight weeks later, so larger clutches and repeat laying are possible under rich captive conditions.

Incubation

In the six-year study, hatchlings emerged after a mean of about 80 days, range 75-86 days. Use moderate-warm lacertid incubation and avoid excessive heat or saturated substrate. Record exact egg mass, laying date, incubation temperature and hatch date for your own line.

Winter cooling

A practical captive winter phase is about two months with daytime air around 19-23 C and nights around 14-18 C, reduced basking and reduced feeding. The goal is seasonal down-regulation, not deep brumation or prolonged exposure to very low temperatures.

Evidence confidence

Gran Canaria climate - High

AEMET 1981-2010 normals: mild winter, warm dry summer, wetter autumn/winter.

Adult plant dominance - High

Comparative diet study: about 94-99% vegetal matter by dry weight.

June-August laying - High

Six-year captive study of *G. stehlini*.

Clutch 5-14 - High

Mean 9.8 eggs in the six-year captive dataset.

Incubation 75-86 d - High

Direct captive breeding result; mean about 80 d.

Second clutches - Moderate

Reported by other experienced keepers but not in the six-year single-pair study.

UVI / RH targets - Moderate

Captive working targets inferred from ecology and successful lacertid husbandry.

Winter cooling - Moderate-high

Consistent with island seasonality and long-term successful captive practice.

Key references

1. AEMET Gran Canaria Aeropuerto 1981-2010 climate normals: monthly temperature, rainfall and RH. 2. Lopez-Darias et al. (2015), Functional Ecology: adult *G. stehlini* diet strongly dominated by vegetal matter. 3. Bannert (1998), Salamandra: six-year captive reproduction; June-August laying, 5-14 eggs, 75-86 d incubation. 4. Long-term captive husbandry reports: late-spring mating, mild winter cooling, larger occasional clutches and repeat laying.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Gallotia stehlini

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	2-3
February	2-3
March	3-4
April	4
May	4-5
June	4-5
July	5
August	5
September	4-5
October	4
November	3
December	2-3

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](#).