

Iguana iguana - Curaçao population

Curaçao Green Iguana

Curaçao - locality-specific semi-arid dry/wet-season breeding and keeper protocol.

Core profile	Active temperatures	Breeding anchor	Seasonality
Distinct semi-arid island population of green iguana on Curaçao; strongly adapted to seasonal drought and sparse dry-forest forage.	Warm year-round: 28-32 C daytime air, 23-27 C nights, and a broad 38-42 C basking surface.	Field studies place courtship/mating in March-April and oviposition mainly late April-May; hatchlings emerge before the main rains.	No brumation. Reproduce the long dry phase mainly by reducing rain/mist, not by chilling the animals.

Annual keeper schedule

Month	Day	Night	Bask	UVI	Light	RH day/night	Rain / mist	Food d/wk	Seasonal management
January	28-30 C	23-25 C	38-41 C	4-6	11.5 h	60-72 / 72-82%	Occasional AM mist	6	Late rains; breeding condition
February	28-30 C	23-25 C	38-41 C	4-6	11.8 h	55-68 / 70-80%	Drying; 2-3 light mists/wk	6	Dry season starts; courtship
March	28-31 C	23-25 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.1 h	52-66 / 68-78%	Sparse mist; water always	5-6	Main mating period
April	29-31 C	24-25 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.4 h	50-64 / 68-78%	Dry upper zones; moist nest	5-6	Mating / nesting begins
May	29-32 C	24-26 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.6 h	50-65 / 68-80%	Very dry air; moist deep nest	5	Main oviposition / recovery
June	29-32 C	24-26 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.7 h	52-68 / 70-82%	Dry; occasional pulse rain	5-6	Late laying / incubation
July	29-32 C	25-26 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.6 h	55-72 / 72-84%	Transitional; light showers	6-7	Incubation / first hatchlings
August	29-32 C	25-27 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.4 h	58-75 / 74-86%	More showers / fresh browse	7	Main hatchling emergence
September	30-32 C	25-27 C	39-42 C	4-6	12.2 h	62-78 / 78-88%	Wet-season build-up	7	Juvenile growth / recovery
October	29-31 C	25-26 C	38-41 C	4-6	12.0 h	68-82 / 82-92%	Frequent short showers	7	Wettest phase / browse abundance
November	28-31 C	24-26 C	38-41 C	4-6	11.7 h	68-82 / 82-92%	Frequent showers	7	Wet phase / body condition
December	28-30 C	23-25 C	38-41 C	4-6	11.5 h	64-78 / 78-88%	Showers easing	6-7	Conditioning toward breeding

Reading the table: basking temperatures are surface temperatures, not enclosure air temperatures. RH targets assume excellent ventilation. Curaçao seasonality is driven mainly by rainfall and food availability; do not reproduce drought by withholding drinking water.

Housing, climate and nutrition

Population identity and conservation value

Use the label *Iguana iguana* - *Curaçao population*. Genetic work has repeatedly treated Curaçao animals as a highly distinctive Caribbean population adapted to dry forest, and recent invasion research indicates that the wild Curaçao population itself has not been swamped by known non-native green-iguana lineages. Do not assign an unrecognized subspecies name without genetic/taxonomic evidence. Preserve locality and pedigree records.

Natural habitat and climate

Curaçao lies in the Southern Caribbean Dry Zone. Official climate information describes a semi-arid climate, with the clearest dry phase from February through June, transitional July-August, and the rainiest period September-January. Long-term field work on iguanas reports mean annual rainfall around 570 mm, mean monthly air temperature about 27.5 C, and strong trade winds. Rain is often brief and localized.

Enclosure and structure

A large arboreal herbivore needing strong branches, broad basking shelves, visual barriers and substantial floor area. For one adult, about 200 x 120 x 200 cm is a practical indoor minimum starting point; larger room-scale housing is preferred. Provide shaded refuges and a deep, compactable nesting zone for adult females.

Heat, basking and UVB

Keep general daytime air around 28-32 C and nights around 23-27 C. Provide a broad 38-42 C basking surface while retaining cooler shaded air below. A measured UVI around 4-6 at the primary basking zone is a practical captive target, with easy retreat below UVI 1. Strong air movement is appropriate, but avoid desiccating the animal.

Humidity, water and rainfall

Although Curaçao is arid, field measurements report relatively high mean ambient RH because of maritime conditions. Do not keep these iguanas bone-dry. During February-June reduce misting/rainfall frequency while keeping clean drinking water and a humid refuge. Build showers gradually in July-August and increase short rain events during September-January. Ventilation is essential.

Diet and feeding rhythm

Adults should remain overwhelmingly herbivorous: diverse calcium-rich leaves and greens, edible browse, flowers, fibrous vegetables and smaller amounts of fruit. Curaçao field studies show strong seasonal food limitation in the dry period and renewed leaf production after summer rains. In captivity, reproduce seasonality by changing variety and caloric density modestly - never by starving adults or juveniles.

Body condition

Curaçao females are smaller than many mainland green iguanas and invest heavily in relatively large eggs. Avoid obesity before breeding, but females need excellent mineral reserves before follicle growth. Adult males naturally lose condition during the March-April mating period; females lose most condition around oviposition in May-June. Track body mass monthly through the cycle.

Breeding, nesting and evidence

Annual breeding sequence

The best Curaçao-specific field data place courtship and mating in March-April, followed by oviposition mainly from late April through May (some females may extend into June). Hatchlings emerge well before the main September-January rains, coinciding with the first summer showers and new leaf growth. This timing is a key adaptation to the island's semi-arid environment.

Nesting

Install the nest area before females become visibly gravid. Provide at least 45-60 cm of deep, diggable sandy-soil substrate with a dry surface and a stable, slightly moist lower layer. Females must be able to excavate a tunnel/chamber without collapse. Persistent digging without laying, straining, weakness or prolonged anorexia requires veterinary assessment.

Clutch characteristics

The original Curaçao work found that clutch size, clutch mass and egg mass all increase with female size. Curaçao females are substantially smaller than humid-mainland females and produce fewer but larger eggs and larger hatchlings. A later comparative review citing the Curaçao dataset reports a mean clutch size of about 16.9 eggs. Treat this as a population average, not a target for every female.

Incubation

Species-wide green-iguana practice is the best available captive guide because controlled Curaçao-specific incubation trials are limited. A practical starting point is about 28.5-30 C in stable, moderately humid incubation medium, with careful monitoring for condensation, desiccation and swelling. Expect roughly 90-110 days depending on temperature and individual clutch; do not chase short incubation by overheating.

Hatchlings

Curaçao hatchlings are relatively large for the female body size. Keep them warm, brightly lit and very well hydrated, with dense cover and easy access to tender leaves and flowers. Do not impose the adult dry-season feeding restriction on young animals; their first months should emphasize steady growth and calcium/mineral balance.

Social management

Adult males are territorial and should not be housed together unless an exceptionally large, complex space allows reliable separation. During breeding, monitor females for harassment and provide escape routes/visual breaks. Conservation-value Curaçao animals should not be crossed with mainland, morph or unknown-origin iguanas if locality purity matters.

Evidence anchors

- van Marken Lichtenbelt & Albers 1993, Copeia 1993(3):790-798: Curaçao reproductive cycle follows rainfall; mating occurs in the first half of the dry season, egg laying later in the dry season, and hatchlings emerge before the rainy season. Curaçao females are smaller and produce fewer but larger eggs than humid-mainland animals.
- van Marken Lichtenbelt et al. 1993, Ecology: field work on Curaçao recorded courtship/mating in March-April and oviposition at the end of April-May; mean monthly air temperature about 27.5 C, annual rainfall about 570 mm and strong trade winds.
- Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao / Meteorological Department: official climate description places the dry season in February-June, July-August as transitional, and rainy season September-January.
- International Iguana Foundation / IUCN genetics project summaries: Curaçao green iguanas are highly distinct genetically and specialized to dry-forest habitat; locality conservation and pedigree documentation are therefore important.
- Comparative nesting literature citing the original Curaçao dataset reports a mean clutch size of approximately 16.9 eggs, lower than many mainland populations.
- General *Iguana iguana* UVB, nutrition and incubation guidance is used only where Curaçao-specific experimental husbandry data are unavailable.

Review date: 2 October 2026. This protocol is designed for locality-known Curaçao animals and should be refined from your own proven breeding records.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

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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	4-6
February	4-6
March	4-6
April	4-6
May	4-6
June	4-6
July	4-6
August	4-6
September	4-6
October	4-6
November	4-6
December	4-6

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](#).