

Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Phymaturus delheyi - Tromen spiny-tailed rock lizard

Identity and range

Valid patagonicus-group species known only from volcanic rims around Butaco Creek on the northern Tromen massif, Neuquen, Argentina. Type locality: 36 deg 59 S, 69 deg 59 W at about 1810 m. The species is extremely localized and strongly saxicolous.

Climate and habitat

Cold-arid volcanic upland with severe snowy winters, warm sunny summer days and large daily temperature swings. Tromen climate information near 1800 m gives about 13 C mean annual temperature and roughly 350 mm annual precipitation, with abundant winter snow. Animals bask on rock and retreat deep into crevices.

Diet and reproduction

Viviparous. The original species account reports plant matter and arthropods in the diet, and one captive female produced two offspring. No species-specific mating month, gestation length or birth season was published, so reproductive timing below is deliberately comparative and should be recorded rather than assumed.

Month	Day ambient	Night	Basking surface	UVI*	Photoperiod	Spray / water	Adult food offers*	Seasonal management
Jan	6-10 C	4-7 C	Off	Off	0-8 h	Water check; no routine spray	None	Deep brumation
Feb	6-10 C	4-7 C	Off	Off	0-8 h	Water check; no routine spray	None	Deep brumation
Mar	8-12 C	4-7 C	Off; 34-36 late	Off / 1	8-9 h	Water check; no routine spray	None / late restart	Staged emergence late
Apr	13-17 C	6-9 C	35-38 C	2-3	10.5 h	Light local spray every 10-14 d	2-3	Emergence / reconditioning
May	17-21 C	8-11 C	37-40 C	3-4	12 h	Occasional local spray	4-5	Full activity / courtship watch
Jun	19-23 C	9-12 C	38-41 C	3-4	14 h	Occasional local spray	5-6	Peak activity / mating watch
Jul	20-24 C	10-13 C	38-41 C	3-4	14.5 h	Occasional local spray	5-6	Peak activity / possible gestation
Aug	19-23 C	9-12 C	38-40 C	3-4	13.5 h	Light local spray every 10-14 d	5-6	Possible gestation / birth watch
Sep	17-21 C	8-11 C	36-39 C	2-3	12 h	Light local spray every 10-14 d	4-5	Birth watch / recovery
Oct	13-17 C	6-9 C	34-37 C limited	1-2	10 h	Minimal local spray	1-2 then stop	Seasonal taper
Nov	8-12 C	4-8 C	Off	Off	8 h	Water check; no routine spray	None	Cooling / brumation
Dec	6-10 C	4-7 C	Off	Off	0-8 h	Water check; no routine spray	None	Deep brumation

Climate translation: this northern-hemisphere programme shifts the native Tromen warm/activity season by about six months. Native winter air and snow are ecological context only; captive refuge temperatures must remain measured, stable and safely above freezing.

* UVI and food frequency are facility starting points, not published species-specific requirements. Treat 34-41 C as a local basking-surface target, not a body-temperature or whole-enclosure target. Adjust feeding to appetite, body condition and reproductive status.

Brumation safety: cool only healthy, well-conditioned adults after feeding has stopped and the gut is clear. Record starting mass, perform planned checks, reweigh every 2-4 weeks, and reverse cooling for weight loss, dehydration, respiratory signs or persistent activity without normal digestion.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

A cold-arid volcanic crevice specialist: secure rock architecture, intense local basking, cool refuges, strong air exchange and a long seasonal rest are central to the model.

Enclosure and rockwork

For one adult, 150 x 75 x 90 cm is a practical facility minimum starting point rather than a published requirement; larger is preferred for a compatible pair or family unit. Build multiple tight horizontal and angled crevices across warm, intermediate and cool zones.

Support slabs and rocks directly from the enclosure base. Use volcanic-style ledges, secure narrow retreats, open basking faces and sparse steppe-style planting or browse. The original description found animals mainly in crevice microhabitat on rocky outcrops.

Heat, light and UVB

No direct thermal-preference or UV-dose study was located for *P. delheyi*. Use 38-41 C only as a local basking-surface starting point during peak activity, with much cooler air and immediate retreat into deep shaded crevices. Measured UVI 3-4 at the basking position is a conservative facility starting point; maintain deep retreats below UVI 1.

Water, spray and air quality

Keep shallow fresh water available year-round. The Tromen massif is relatively dry overall but receives much of its precipitation and snow in winter. During the active season use only occasional localized wetting and let rock and substrate surfaces dry fully. During cooling, avoid persistently damp cold refuges and maintain strong ventilation.

Diet and feeding

Direct observation in the original species account recorded both plant matter and arthropods. Base adult feeding on varied fibrous greens, edible weeds, safe browse and flowers, while offering small invertebrates as an occasional minor component rather than the staple. Juveniles and recovering females can receive proportionally more animal prey if body condition and digestion remain appropriate.

Social management and handling

Use only one adult male per enclosure unless long-term compatibility has been repeatedly demonstrated. Duplicate basking positions, feeding points and secure crevices, and retain immediate separation capacity. Avoid unnecessary handling, especially during cooling and suspected gestation.

Daily keeper checks

Check	Record
Activity	Emergence, basking duration, crevice choice and locomotion
Feeding	Plant mix, any arthropods, intake, water and faeces
Condition	Mass trend, jaw, eyes, skin, toes, limbs and wounds
Environment	Basking surface, warm/cool air, UVI and refuge temperature

Veterinary triggers

Seek reptile-veterinary assessment for persistent weight loss, weakness, abnormal breathing, bite wounds, jaw or limb swelling, failure to bask after warm-up, continued activity during deep cooling, or a suspected gravid female with declining condition. Quarantine and faecal screening are prudent for all new animals.

Breeding, Viviparity and Evidence Review

Species-specific breeding timing is sparse; the one confirmed captive litter is useful, but seasonal windows should be treated as working hypotheses and recorded carefully.

Seasonal breeding management

The original description confirms viviparity but does not publish mating month, gestation length or birth season. The May-July courtship/mating and August-September birth-watch periods on this shifted northern-hemisphere calendar are therefore comparative windows based on the regional Phymaturus pattern, not measured *P. delheyi* dates.

Warm healthy adults gradually through March and April. Use visual contact through a divider before direct introduction and duplicate heat, food and crevice access. Separate for biting, sustained pursuit, crevice blocking or feeding exclusion. Record courtship and confirmed mating separately.

Gestation and litter size

One female from the original species series was maintained in captivity and gave birth to two offspring. That confirms at least a two-young litter is possible, but it does not establish the normal litter-size range or frequency. Maintain unrestricted access to the full thermal gradient through suspected gestation and use mass trend, abdominal contour, appetite and reptile-veterinary ultrasound when clinically justified.

Neonates

Record birth date, litter size, neonatal mass and length, maternal recovery and any prolonged mother-young association. House neonates securely with narrow crevices, gentle thermal gradients, low-to-moderate measured UVB and finely cut leafy forage. Offer appropriately sized arthropods only as a small supplementary component.

Evidence confidence

Topic	Confidence and application
Identity / range	High: original description and current Reptile Database
Habitat / microhabitat	High: original field observations at Butaco Creek
Diet / litter	Moderate: direct observations, but only one captive litter is reported
Climate	Moderate-high: Tromen 1800 m climate context plus nearby Buta Ranquil monthly data
Thermal / UV / enclosure	Low-moderate: conservative facility starting points; no direct <i>P. delheyi</i> study
Breeding timing	Low: comparative schedule only; record actual dates

How climate was translated

The type locality is at about 1810 m on the northern Tromen massif. Regional climate descriptions at about the same elevation report severe snowy winters, warm summer days, large daily thermal swings, about 13 C annual mean temperature and roughly 350 mm annual precipitation. Nearby Buta Ranquil monthly averages are warmer because of its lower elevation, so this captive schedule intentionally keeps cool air and a prolonged winter rest while avoiding outdoor freezing exposures.

Record set for every breeding attempt

Individual IDs and provenance; dates of temperature and light changes; mass trend; food intake; basking and crevice use; introductions and aggression; courtship and confirmed mating; ultrasound findings where clinically indicated; gestational mass trend; birth date; litter size; neonatal measurements; maternal recovery; and any social association after birth.

Key references

1. Avila, Perez, Perez & Morando (2011), Zootaxa 2924 - original description, locality, crevice use, diet observations, viviparity and one two-young captive litter.
2. The Reptile Database - current taxonomic treatment and type locality.
3. Argentine national reptile assessment (2012) - conservation context for the extremely restricted endemic.
4. Tromen regional climate summaries and nearby Buta Ranquil climate normals - seasonal climate translation only.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Phymaturus delheyi

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	Off
February	Off
March	Off / 1
April	2-3
May	3-4
June	3-4
July	3-4
August	3-4
September	2-3
October	1-2
November	Off
December	Off

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](#).