

Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Pristidactylus araucanus - Araucanian rock lizard

Identity and habitat

Endemic to Neuquen, Argentina, with the type locality at Laguna Blanca. It is a rare, seasonal, strongly saxicolous lizard of basalt plateaus, lava flows, scree and open xeric Patagonian shrub-steppe.

Climate and moisture

The Laguna Blanca region is arid and extremely windy. Summers are dry; most annual precipitation falls in autumn-winter. Exposed surfaces dry rapidly even when cool-season atmospheric RH is higher. Captive RH targets below are working values, not direct field micro-RH measurements.

Diet and reproduction

Published Argentine sources describe the species as insectivorous, including ants and beetles, and oviparous. Detailed clutch size, laying dates and incubation parameters remain poorly documented, so the breeding months in this schedule are a conservative working hypothesis.

MONTH	DAY AMBIENT	NIGHT	BASKING	UVI*	PHOTO	RH DAY / NIGHT*	SPRAY / RAIN	FOOD*	STATUS / BREEDING
January	8-12 C	2-5 C	Off	Off	8.5 h	40-55 / 50-65%	None	None	Cold rest / inactive
February	8-13 C	2-6 C	Off	Off	9 h	40-55 / 50-65%	None	None	Cold rest / inactive
March	12-16 C	4-8 C	30-32 C limited	1-2	10 h	35-50 / 45-60%	Localized light spray every 14 d	1-2 late	Staged emergence
April	16-20 C	7-10 C	32-34 C	2-3	11 h	30-45 / 40-55%	Very light spray every 10-14 d	2-3	Full activity
May	19-23 C	9-12 C	33-35 C	3	12.5 h	30-45 / 40-55%	Very light spray every 10-14 d	3-4	Working mating window
June	21-25 C	10-14 C	34-36 C	3-4	14 h	30-45 / 40-55%	Optional localized spray every 14 d	3-4	Peak activity / breeding
July	22-26 C	11-15 C	34-36 C	3-4	14.5 h	30-45 / 40-55%	Optional localized spray every 14 d	3-4	Possible gravid / nesting
August	21-25 C	10-14 C	33-35 C	3	13.5 h	30-45 / 40-55%	Very light spray every 10-14 d	3-4	Possible laying / recovery
September	18-22 C	8-12 C	32-34 C	2-3	12 h	35-50 / 45-60%	Light spray every 10-14 d	2-3	Late activity
October	14-18 C	5-9 C	30-32 C limited	1-2	10.5 h	35-50 / 45-60%	Minimal	1-2	Autumn taper
November	10-14 C	3-7 C	Off	Off / 1	9 h	40-55 / 50-65%	None	Stop after gut clears	Cooling down
December	8-12 C	2-5 C	Off	Off	8.5 h	40-55 / 50-65%	None	None	Cold rest / inactive

Climate translation: native warm-season activity is shifted approximately six months for Northern Hemisphere management. Exact species-specific emergence, mating and laying dates are poorly published and should be refined from your own records.

* RH, UVI, spray and breeding timing are captive working targets. The species lives in an arid, wind-exposed steppe; do not equate cool-season regional humidity with a wet enclosure.

Moisture rule: keep exposed rock and substrate dry most of the time. If spraying, wet only a small localized area or refuge and allow rapid drying. Fresh drinking water remains available during active months.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

Arid basalt-steppe husbandry: strong ventilation, stable rock crevices, cool nights, local basking and very restrained moisture.

Enclosure and refuge design

For one adult, approximately 120 x 70 x 60 cm or larger is a practical starting point. Build a stable basalt-style rockscape with multiple narrow crevices, flat basking slabs and shaded deep retreats. Support all heavy rocks from the enclosure base. Use a dry mineral substrate with only one slightly more humid refuge.

Heat and UVB

This is a seasonal Patagonian steppe lizard, not a tropical or desert-Uromastix species. Keep most enclosure air moderate and provide a local sun-like rock basking surface around the low-mid 30s C during peak activity. Provide a measured basking UVI around 3-4 with abundant shade below UVI 1.

RH, spray and ventilation

Strong ventilation is essential. During active months, aim roughly for 30-45% daytime RH and 40-55% overnight, accepting natural room fluctuation. Use very light localized spraying only every 10-14 days if needed for drinking/shedding, never broad daily misting. In the cold season, stop routine spraying and keep surfaces dry.

Winter rest

Wild habitat experiences cold winters, frost and snow. Cool only healthy animals after food has stopped and the gut is empty. This schedule uses conservative captive lows above freezing rather than reproducing the most extreme wild minima. Monitor mass and hydration throughout the rest period.

Diet

Base the active-season diet on varied gut-loaded invertebrates: crickets, roaches, locusts, beetles and appropriately sized larvae. Ants and beetles are specifically reported in the wild diet. Avoid an excessively fatty feeder-heavy diet and provide calcium/mineral support appropriate to your UVB system.

Feeding rhythm

Feed sparingly during emergence, increase to 3-4 small feeding opportunities per week during peak activity, then taper in autumn. Stop feeding early enough before winter cooling for complete digestion. Resume only after consistent basking and normal fecal output.

Social management

The species is rare and microhabitat-specialized; detailed social data are limited. Individual housing is the safest default. For breeding introductions, duplicate basking and refuge sites and supervise closely. Separate for repeated pursuit, biting, refuge exclusion or suppressed feeding.

Daily keeper checks

Check alertness, posture, locomotion, eyes/nose, toes/tail, hydration, appetite, feces, shed quality and body mass trend. Verify that basking and UV systems are functioning and that rockwork remains stable. Humid refuges should be lightly moist, never wet or stagnant.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

Oviparity is documented; detailed clutch and incubation biology remain poorly known, so breeding dates below are intentionally conservative.

Reproductive evidence

Argentine National Parks and the Reptile Database list *Pristidactylus araucanus* as oviparous. The available species accounts emphasize that its biology is poorly known; reliable clutch-size and incubation data were not located in the sources reviewed.

Working breeding window

The May-July Northern Hemisphere breeding window on this sheet is a husbandry hypothesis based on the normal spring-summer reproductive timing of comparable temperate *Pristidactylus*, not a published fixed schedule for *P. araucanus*. Record courtship, mating, follicular development and laying dates to improve future versions.

Nest provision

For females, provide a secluded lay option beneath or beside stable rock: a deeper pocket of loose mineral soil/sand with a slightly moist lower layer. The surrounding enclosure remains dry. Offer more than one thermal/moisture option and avoid repeatedly disturbing a female investigating a nest site.

Incubation caution

Do not use high tropical incubation temperatures by default. If eggs are produced, record dimensions and mass and begin with a conservative moderate-temperature incubation strategy while maintaining a moisture gradient. Adjust only from direct developmental observations and your own successful records.

Evidence confidence

Taxonomy / distribution - High

Accepted species; Neuquen, Argentina, type locality Laguna Blanca.

Habitat - High

Basalt plateaus, rock fields, lava flows and open xeric Patagonian steppe.

Diet - Moderate-high

Insectivory documented, including ants and beetles.

Reproductive mode - High

Oviparity reported by Argentine National Parks and Reptile Database.

Clutch / laying timing - Low

No robust species-specific clutch/timing data located.

Thermal targets - Moderate-low

Derived from regional climate and comparable *Pristidactylus*; direct thermal study not located.

RH / spray targets - Moderate

Translated from arid regional climate, wind and precipitation seasonality; not direct lizard micro-RH.

Key references

1. Sistema de Informacion de Biodiversidad, Parques Nacionales Argentina: species account for *Pristidactylus araucanus*.
2. Herpetofauna of Laguna Blanca National Park: confirmed park occurrence and rocky steppe habitat.
3. Laguna Blanca regional climate: arid, windy, dry summers, precipitation concentrated in autumn-winter.
4. Reptile Database: accepted taxonomy, Neuquen distribution and oviparity.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Pristidactylus araucanus

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	1-2
April	2-3
May	3
June	3-4
July	3-4
August	3
September	2-3
October	1-2
November	Off / 1
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](#).