

Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Xenagama taylori - Dwarf shield-tailed agama

Range and taxonomy Northwestern Somalia and adjacent eastern Ethiopia, mainly around 1,050-1,500 m. The Haud, Somalia is the type locality. <i>X. taylori</i> is the smallest recognized <i>Xenagama</i> and is oviparous.	Habitat and form Dry open woodland, flat sandy semi-desert and semi-arid savannah with sparse herbs or shrubs. It generally avoids rocky, grassy and clay-dominated ground. Adults excavate burrows ending in relatively humid soil and block the entrance with the broad shield tail.	Conservation and trade IUCN Least Concern and not listed by CITES. International pet trade occurs but its scale is poorly known. Retain origin, transfer, quarantine and breeding records; wild-origin animals require careful veterinary screening.
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Month	Day ambient	Night	Basking surface	UVI	Photoperiod	Lamp hours	Surface / refuge RH	Adult feeding	Seasonal management
Jan	24-26 C	18-20 C	35-38 C	1.5-2	10 h	5 h	35-45 / 50-60%	2-3 feeds	Mild conditioning
Feb	26-28 C	19-21 C	39-42 C	2-3	11 h	7 h	35-45 / 50-60%	3-4 feeds	Warm-up / courtship
Mar	28-30 C	21-23 C	40-43 C	3	12 h	8 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4-5 feeds	Courtship / mating
Apr	28-30 C	22-24 C	42-45 C	3-4	12.5 h	9 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4-5 feeds	Mating / first laying
May	29-31 C	22-24 C	42-45 C	3-4	13 h	10 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4-5 feeds	Egg-laying / recovery
Jun	29-31 C	22-24 C	42-45 C	3-4	13 h	10 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4-5 feeds	Breeding / recovery
Jul	29-31 C	22-24 C	42-45 C	3-4	13 h	10 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4-5 feeds	Breeding / recovery
Aug	29-31 C	22-24 C	42-45 C	3-4	13 h	10 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4-5 feeds	Late laying / recovery
Sep	28-30 C	21-23 C	41-44 C	3	12 h	9 h	40-50 / 55-65%	4 feeds	Season winds down
Oct	27-29 C	20-22 C	39-42 C	2-3	11.5 h	8 h	40-50 / 50-60%	3-4 feeds	Recovery / autumn
Nov	26-28 C	19-21 C	37-40 C	2	11 h	7 h	35-45 / 50-60%	3 feeds	Taper
Dec	24-26 C	18-20 C	35-38 C	1.5-2	10 h	5 h	35-45 / 50-60%	2-3 feeds	Mild conditioning

Operating note: this is a captive-facility starting schedule, not a published species standard. Adjust gradually from measured enclosure temperatures, UVI, body mass, appetite, faecal output and behaviour. The hotspot must always be escapable.

Seasonal note: wild day length near the equator changes only modestly. The December-January reduction shown here is an optional captive conditioning cue for healthy adults, not a literal wild-season simulation. Retain daily basking and do not impose the five-hour winter day sometimes reported in older captive practice.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

A tiny Horn of Africa burrow specialist requiring sandy loam, a dry surface over a humid depth, intense light and close social monitoring.

Enclosure, burrow and substrate

Use at least **90 x 60 x 60 cm for a proven pair**; for a breeding group of one male with two or three females, prefer **150 x 60 x 60 cm or larger**, with multiple separated resource zones and immediate separation capacity. Provide **20-30 cm of cohesive sandy loam** for adults and a deeper nesting area where construction permits.

Keep the surface mostly dry while maintaining a gently humid lower layer that holds a tunnel without becoming wet or airless. Use flat slabs and low vegetation as roof points, but support every heavy item from the enclosure floor before adding substrate. Juveniles may initially prefer surface debris and shallow hides rather than adult-style burrows.

Heat, light and UVB

During full activity provide daytime air around **28-31 C**, a cooler retreat and measured basking surfaces around **40-45 C**. Use more than one small basking opportunity in group housing and measure surface and air temperatures separately.

Target **UVI 3-4** at the principal active-season basking position, with complete shade in the burrow and additional areas below UVI 1. Measure at the animal's low body height; lamp percentages alone do not establish the dose.

Water and humidity

Keep a very shallow dish available and offer light morning droplets several times weekly while preserving a dry, ventilated surface. Maintain roughly **50-65% RH within the lower burrow or laying layer**; use substrate feel and moisture gradient rather than making the whole enclosure humid. Never saturate or collapse occupied tunnels.

Diet and feeding

Use varied, gut-loaded invertebrates as the main diet: small crickets, roaches, locusts, black soldier fly larvae and occasional mealworms or other larvae. Offer a small portion of safe weeds and leafy plants alongside; wild records include both insects and plant material.

Feed adults about **3-5 appropriately sized prey items on 4-5 days weekly** during full activity, adjusted to condition and reproduction; juveniles need smaller daily meals. Dust most insect meals with plain calcium. Use D3 and multivitamins conservatively according to measured UVB, diet and veterinary guidance.

Social management

Never house two adult males together. A male may be kept with one or more compatible females only where each animal can feed, bask and retreat independently. Females can also be territorial. Separate for chasing, bites, suppressed emergence, blocked burrows, food exclusion or declining mass.

Daily keeper checks

Check	Record
Activity	Emergence, basking, digging, retreat use and abnormal hiding
Feeding	Items offered, intake and any food exclusion
Condition	Mass trend, jaw, eyes, skin, tail, feet and faeces
Environment	Hotspot surface, warm/cool air, UVI, burrow stability and water

Veterinary triggers

Seek reptile-veterinary assessment for persistent anorexia, marked weight loss, jaw swelling, weakness, abnormal breathing, repeated unproductive digging, retained eggs, wounds or failure to use heat normally. Quarantine, origin records and faecal screening are prudent for new animals.

Breeding, Nesting and Evidence Review

Several captive breeding records exist, but output varies between facilities; use the ranges below as welfare-led working values rather than production targets.

Seasonal breeding management

Use a modest December-January reduction followed by a staged February-March warm-up. Males may develop a vivid blue throat and display with head movements and tail wriggling. Courtship and repeated mating can be brief and vigorous; monitor females closely rather than relying on a fixed calendar.

Introduce or retain adults only where compatibility is demonstrated. Remove either animal if courtship becomes injurious or access to heat, food or a burrow is blocked. Record mating and condition, because repeated clutches can deplete a small female rapidly.

Nest provision

Provide a private nesting route before a female appears gravid: at least **20-25 cm** of warm, cohesive sandy loam beneath a slab or in a dedicated laying zone. A slightly moister patch may stimulate excavation, but the chamber should be only damp enough to hold shape, never wet.

Monitor digging remotely and avoid repeated disturbance. After laying, record the female's mass, palpation or imaging findings, hydration, appetite and faeces; provide daily water, heat and appropriately calcium-supported food during recovery.

Eggs and incubation

Published and long-term specialist records report approximately **4-11 eggs** per clutch. One to three clutches is a responsible planning range; repeated fourth or fifth clutches should trigger nutritional, separation and recovery review rather than being pursued as a target.

Use **27.5-29 C** as a cautious starting range, with roughly **43-55 days** as a planning window. Use lightly damp perlite or vermiculite in a stable lidded container, avoid free water or droplets on eggs, preserve orientation and track egg mass, condensation and logger temperature.

Key references

1. Uetz, P., Freed, P., Aguilar, R., Reyes, F., Kudera, J. & Hošek, J. (eds.). The Reptile Database: *Xenagama taylori*. Taxonomy, distribution, diagnosis and oviparity; accessed 22 September 2026.
2. Wagner, P., Mazuch, T. & Bauer, A.M. (2013). An extraordinary tail - integrative review of the agamid genus *Xenagama*. *Journal of Zoological Systematics and Evolutionary Research* 51:144-164.
3. Spawls, S. (2021). *Xenagama taylori*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: Least Concern. Distribution, habitat, ecology and threats.
4. Neizhko, I., Marushchak, O. & Marchevskaya, E. Keeping of dwarf shield-tailed agama (*X. taylori*) at BION Terrarium Center. Institutional enclosure, substrate, climate and feeding practice.
5. Dedmar, A. (2002); Fritz, P. (2009); and long-term specialist captive records. Breeding, clutch and incubation observations.

Evidence confidence

Topic	Confidence and application
Taxonomy / range	High: current database and regional review
Habitat / burrowing	High-moderate: field synthesis and IUCN assessment material
Enclosure / feeding	Moderate: long-term specialist and institutional captive records
Captive seasonal table	Moderate-low: facility starting points, to be revised from records
Clutch / incubation	Moderate: several concordant captive breeding records

Source corrections applied

The habitat was corrected from generic sandy-to-hard desert to sparse sandy semi-desert that generally avoids rocky, grassy and clay-dominated ground. Substrate depth increased from 10-12 cm to 20-30 cm for adult burrowing and nesting. Juvenile surface shelter was distinguished from adult burrows, winter photoperiod reduction was moderated, and repeated high clutch output was reframed as a welfare risk.

Record set for every breeding attempt

Individual IDs; dates of seasonal changes; weekly mass; feeding; courtship and mating dates; first digging; laying date and clutch data; egg dimensions and mass; incubator and media details; temperature logger export; fertility; hatch dates; neonatal mass; post-lay recovery and complications.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Xenagama taylori

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	1.5-2
February	2-3
March	3
April	3-4
May	3-4
June	3-4
July	3-4
August	3-4
September	3
October	2-3
November	2
December	1.5-2

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](#).