



Long Tail Grass Lizard

(*Takydromus sexlineatus*)

Habitat: well-planted savanna Diet: insectivorous
Adult Size: 8-12 inches (mostly tail) Lifespan: 5 years or more
Native To: Southeast Asia

Did You Know???

- True to its name, the Long Tail Grass Lizard has a tail that can be three times (or more) longer than its body.
- The Long Tail Grass Lizard's tail is prehensile, like a monkey's, so it can wrap around branches and other objects.
- Fast and agile, this lizard will cover a large territory while foraging for food in the wild.

What You Should Know About The Long Tail Grass Lizard

The Basics -- Agile and active, yet calm and tolerant, the attractive Long Tail Grass Lizard makes an enjoyable pet for anyone willing to invest the time and effort in caring for it. This is a very slender greenish-brown lizard with various stripe configurations. Its tail is considerably longer than its body. In nature, it spends most of its time moving through tall grass or areas of thick low-lying vegetation in search of insects. However, it will also climb trees. A docile lizard, it can be kept in communal enclosures, but some males can fight one another, so they should not be housed together. The Long Tail Grass Lizard is most active during daylight hours.

Vertical Space Essential -- Long Tail Grass Lizards are excellent climbers, so a vertically oriented enclosure with lots of climbing branches is a must. It's also a good idea to place cork bark on some enclosure sides to provide added climbing opportunities. In nature, Long Tail Grass Lizards thrive in areas with thick vegetation, so plenty of plants and vines (real or artificial) should be kept in their enclosure. The enclosure should be at least 15 gallons in size for a single specimen, but a larger tank is preferable. (Bigger is always better with these active lizards.) Any enclosure used should have a secure screened top for ventilation. Hiding places are also essential.

Substrate: Moisture-Retaining Material -- Since humidity is so important to the health of this species, it is essential to select a substrate that retains moisture without promoting the growth of mold, such as peat moss and bark chips (provided they are *not* made from aromatic woods like cedar and pine.)

Lighting: Full Spectrum -- Like other diurnal (daytime active) lizards, the Long Tail Grass Lizard must be exposed to UVB and UVA light. Exposure to UVB rays is critical in allowing the Long Tail Grass Lizard to synthesize vitamin D3 and absorb calcium. If the lizard isn't exposed to an adequate level of UVB lighting, it will develop a metabolic bone disorder. There are a variety of fluorescent tubes available at PSP that emit UVB light. Fluorescent tubes that produce UVB rays should be replaced every six months. Glass blocks out UVB light, so overhead light sources should be kept behind a wire mesh cover, not a glass or acrylic tank top. This light source should be within 12 inches of the animal.

Temperature: A Thermal Gradient -- The Long Tail Grass Lizard must be provided with a thermal gradient so it can regulate its body temperature. Daytime ambient temperatures in the enclosure should range from 75 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit, with a basking spot in the 90-95 degree range. At night, temperatures can be lowered to 65-70 degrees. Heat can be maintained through a combination of lamps. Nighttime temperatures can be maintained by ceramic heat emitters, which do not produce light. Follow directions carefully with ceramic heat emitters, use fixtures with porcelain or ceramic sockets and to protect against fires, do not place them by dry wood or flammable fabrics. Since Long Tail Grass Lizards spend much of their time off the ground, under-tank heat pads should not be used to maintain enclosure temperatures. Thermometers should be positioned in the warmer and cooler areas of the enclosure as well as in the basking spot. Enclosure temperatures should be monitored at branch level as well as ground level.

Humidity: High levels are essential -- Maintaining a humid enclosure is essential to maintaining the health of the Long Tail Grass Lizard. Daily mistings and a shallow water bowl should be used to keep the enclosure's humidity at 70-75 percent. A drip system might also be considered. A hygrometer should be used to measure humidity levels. Like many lizards, Long Tail Grass Lizards will often drink by taking droplets from leaves and other surfaces. However, a bowl of fresh water should always be provided.

Diet: Insects every other day -- Long Tail Grass Lizards are insectivorous, so they should be fed a variety of insects, such as commercially available crickets, fruit flies, mealworms, earthworms, and the occasional waxworm. Offer food to these lizards every other day, unless they're growing juveniles, in which case they can be fed twice a day. Insects should be gut loaded before being offered. Use a calcium/vitamin supplement to dust insects every third feeding.

How To Handle A Long Tail Grass Lizard

This is a delicate lizard that should be handled only when absolutely necessary. When handled, it must be treated very gently to avoid injury. Approach from the side, speaking to the lizard in a soothing voice. Grasp with one hand on the section of the lizard where you can straddle across its back at the front legs. Use your other hand to take hold of the hips. Care must be taken to ensure that the lizard does not "grab" hold of any objects with its long prehensile tail when it is lifted. Always wash your hands before and after handling a lizard.

Look Out For This:

The Long Tail Grass Lizard is a calm and hardy lizard with relatively straightforward care requirements. However, the reptile keeper must be careful to maintain relatively high humidity levels (at least 70%) in its enclosure while avoiding the fungal growth that can result from overly humid tanks.



Recommended Long Tail Grass Lizard Supplies:

- q A top-loading, screened enclosure that provides plenty of vertical room for climbing
- q UVB and UVA emitting light
- q Live plants
- q Heating element to maintain enclosure temperatures
- q Three thermometers, so temperature can be monitored at both ends of the enclosure and in the basking area
- q Appropriate substrate
- q Shallow water bowl
- q Spray bottle
- q Climbing and basking branches
- q Hiding area
- q Calcium and vitamin supplement
- q Hygrometer to measure humidity levels
- q Thermostat and rheostat to regulate heat