



Gold Tegu

Tupinambis teguixin

INTERMEDIATE • 2.5–3.5 FT ADULT • 10–15 YR LIFESPAN • DIURNAL • CHECK STATE LAW

The gold tegu is the Argentine tegu's smaller, warier cousin: bright, busy, genuinely intelligent, and in no hurry to trust you. Start with the law, not the enclosure. Tegus are a Prohibited species in Florida and regulated in several other states, because escaped tegus have established breeding populations. Check state and local law before you buy, and never release one. Everything else in this sheet assumes you cleared that first.

AT A GLANCE	
Adult size	2.5–3.5 ft
Ambient temp	82–90 °F
Basking spot	100–110 °F
Night temp	75–80 °F
Humidity	70–90%
UVB	Required
Diet (omnivore)	Rodents, eggs, fruit, insects
Feeding	Every 2–3 days
Lifespan	10–15 years



Gold tegus are less commonly kept than Argentine tegus, and most in the trade are wild-caught. Check your state's law before you buy.

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01

Nervous, Smart, and Mostly Wild-Caught

Gold tegus are more nervous than Argentine tegus and slower to tame; patience is the whole job. Most animals in the trade are wild-caught, and it shows in both temperament and parasite load. Captive-bred is worth seeking out. Any new import needs quarantine and a fecal check before it goes near your other reptiles. Work in short, predictable sessions, and let the lizard set the pace. Tolerance is what you are building here, not affection.

02

Housing: Build for the Adult

Adults need a room's worth of floor: 96×36×36 at the minimum, 120×48×36 if you can build it. Nothing on a pet store shelf gets there, so plan the adult enclosure before you buy the hatchling. Horizontal space beats height at every stage, and racks are never appropriate for a tegu. Keep one per enclosure; tegus are territorial and will injure each other over food and space. **Lock every door and vent, because escaped tegus are exactly why this species is prohibited in Florida.**

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	36×18×18	48×24×18	More defensive than Argentine tegus and slower to tame.
Juvenile	48×24×24	72×24×24	Fast growth. Often wild-caught imports; captive-bred is worth the hunt.
Subadult	72×30×30	96×36×36	Smaller and more slender than Argentine tegus; still needs floor space.
Adult	96×36×36	120×48×36	Diurnal, active, intelligent. Does not brumate like Argentine tegus.

Enclosure sizes are Habitat-OS life-stage guidance; horizontal floor space beats height, and racks are never appropriate at any stage.

03

Heat, Basking, and UVB

Gold tegus bask hard, and they do not brumate, so hold these numbers all year. Give a broad platform at 100–110 °F, an ambient gradient of 82–90 °F, and a night drop to 75–80 °F. Use overhead halogen on a dimming thermostat, never a heat rock; a tegu will scorch its belly long before it registers the burn. UVB is required. Run a 12% T5 tube above the mesh, 10–13 in over the animal's back, since screen cuts it by up to half and glass blocks it. Replace on the maker's schedule, glowing or not.

04

Humidity & Water

Gold tegus want it damp: 70–90% relative humidity, held steadily rather than spiked by misting. Deep, moist substrate does most of that work; a humid hide over damp sphagnum covers the rest. Give a water tub the animal can climb into and soak, and expect to scrub and refill it daily, because tegus routinely use their water as a toilet. Dry air shows up as stuck shed on the toes and tail tip. Wet plus stagnant air shows up as skin rot, so keep real airflow moving.

05

Substrate, Digging, and Enrichment

Tegus are diggers, and a tegu that cannot dig spends its days scratching at the glass. Give a deep mix of topsoil, coco fiber and cypress: something that holds a burrow and stays damp underneath. Skip dry loose sand at every age, and especially with juveniles, where impaction is a real risk. Add flat cork, a hide the whole animal fits inside, and something new to investigate now and then. This is a smart, curious lizard, and a bare tub of paper towel is a bored one.

06

Feeding an Omnivore

Feed every 2–3 days across the whole range: rodents, insects, eggs and fruit. Whole prey and bugs carry the calcium and roughage that ground meat never will; eggs are a treat, not a staple. Dust insects and produce with plain calcium, no D3 and no phosphorus, at most feedings, and give a reptile multivitamin weekly while growing, twice monthly once adult. Working UVB covers the D3, so skip D3 powders. Adults fed only rodents get fat and stay fat. Offer everything from tongs, not fingers.

07

Health Red Flags

Import parasites are the first thing to rule out: watch for weight loss in an animal that eats well, and stool that turns runny, bloody or foul. A fecal panel at intake settles it. After that, watch the skeleton. Tremors, a soft or swollen jaw, and a wobbling gait mean the calcium and UVB side of the setup has failed. Open-mouth breathing, mucus around the nostrils, or a sudden refusal to bask are all reptile-vet visits, not wait-and-see.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.