



Sudan Plated Lizards

Broadleysaurus major (formerly *Gerrhosaurus major*)

BEGINNER · 16–20 IN ADULT · 15–20 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · EAST AFRICA

One of the most underrated lizards in the hobby. Sudan plated lizards are armored, bulldozing omnivores from the savannas and scrub of East Africa, built like a chunk of chain mail with legs. They're hardy, genuinely docile, and they eat almost anything you put in front of them. The catch is space: this is a beginner lizard that needs a long floor and real digging room to be kept honestly.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	16–20 inches
Ambient temp	80–85 °F
Basking spot	95–100 °F
UVB	Recommended
Humidity	30–50%
Diet	Omnivore: insects, greens, fruit
Feeding	Every 2–3 days
Lifespan	15–20 years



Sudan plated lizards are a regular sight on NARBC vendor tables; ask whether an animal is captive-bred or a wild-caught import.

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01

Temperament & Handling

Plated lizards are calm without being needy, which is rarer than it sounds. This is a medium, heavy-bodied lizard, not a monitor, and a settled adult tong-feeds without drama and sits still for short handling sessions. It tolerates you rather than enjoys you, and that's a fair deal. Startle one and it goes the other way fast, straight down a burrow or wedged into a crevice where the armored back does the arguing. Give it cover and let it come to you.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Everything about this lizard points at the floor. It's a ground-dwelling digger, so length and width beat height every time: 60×24×18 is the honest adult minimum and 72×24×24 is where they look right. Racks are out at every stage. Give a hide at each end of the gradient plus something heavy to wedge under, and latch the lid. House one to an enclosure. Males fight, and in any pair the smaller animal gets crowded off the basking spot and the food dish, then stops eating.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	24×18×12	36×18×12	Often wild-caught imports: quarantine and deworm before anything else.
Juvenile	36×18×12	48×18×18	Omnivore from the start: greens and insects both, not one or the other.
Subadult	48×18×18	60×24×18	Hardy and adaptable; this is where the floor space starts to matter.
Adult	60×24×18	72×24×24	Terrestrial omnivore: horizontal floor, strong basking, UVB. Never a rack.

Enclosure dimensions in inches (W×D×H), from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Every stage is horizontal; none of them belong in a rack.

03

Heat & Light

Run a real gradient: 80–85 °F ambient, a basking surface at 95–100 °F, and a night drop to 70–75 °F. **A diurnal, plant-eating lizard needs UVB; treat the recommendation as a requirement.** It won't climb to a lamp, so put the basking platform on the floor under a linear UVB tube above the screen, heat and beam on one spot. Measure that surface with a probe or infrared gun, and keep the heat on a thermostat. Never a heat rock: they press their bellies flat and won't move off in time.

04

Humidity & Water

Aim for 30–50% humidity, which in most homes means doing very little: good ventilation, a water bowl big enough to soak in, and a dry enclosure the rest of the time. Savanna and scrubland animals handle dry air fine; they don't handle a permanently damp floor, which is where scale rot and respiratory trouble start. Give one humid hide, damp sphagnum under a shelter, so an animal in shed has somewhere to go, and change the water daily.

05

Substrate & Enrichment

These are burrowers, so substrate is enrichment rather than decoration. Use a topsoil and coco fiber mix deep enough for the lizard to disappear into; it holds a tunnel the way loose sand never will, and loose sand has no place with young animals feeding off the floor. Set cork flats and slate on the enclosure base, never on top of the bedding, so nothing can collapse on an animal that dug underneath. Then let it rearrange the rest.

06

Feeding

Omnivore, and they mean it. Insects, greens, and fruit, every 2–3 days. Build the plate around leafy greens and gut-loaded insects (roaches, crickets, black soldier fly larvae); fruit is a bribe, not a base. Dust insects with plain calcium, no D3 and no phosphorus, at most feedings, plus a multivitamin weekly for growers and twice monthly for adults. Two classic mistakes: dropping the greens for a pure insect diet, or letting fruit take over. Offer food in a dish, never off the substrate.

07

Health Red Flags

Two things send plated lizards to the vet. The first is parasites, common in imports: watch for runny or foul stool, and for a lizard that eats well and still loses weight. A fecal test is cheap and settles it. The second is metabolic bone disease from thin UVB or missed calcium; the early signs are a soft or swollen lower jaw, trembling limbs, and a lizard that stops hauling out to bask. Either pattern is a reptile-vet visit, not a 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.