

KEEPING ADVICE SHEET

Crevice & King Skinks

King Skink

Egernia kingii



South-western Crevice Egernia (*Egernia napoleonis*) – Maximum length 24 cm (western form) and 30 cm (eastern form). Category 2.

King Skink (*Egernia kingii*) – Maximum length 55 cm. Category 3.

NATURAL HABITS: South-western Crevice Egernia occurs from Jurien Bay east to the western edge of the Bight in sandplain heath, especially with grass trees and woodlands, and on granite outcrops. King Skink occurs mainly on the coast from Hutt River east to Cape Le Grande National Park in dunes, heath, woodlands and limestone and granite outcrops.

Both these skinks are diurnal.

CAUTION: Large skinks can deliver a painful bite.

HOUSING: These lizards will live in small family groups however, because of its large size, it is recommended that the King Skink be housed in a large outdoor, aviary-like enclosure. One or two adult pairs of crevice egernias can be maintained indoors in a top-ventilated, glass vivarium of at least 50 x 25 x 30 cm. Similar sized purpose built wooden or plastic cages are also suitable. Wire fronted cages are unsuitable for skinks. Enclosures must be secure and escape proof.

CAPTIVE ENVIRONMENT: Skinks will require a warm basking site at one end of cage near a refuge such as a vertical or horizontal crevice, constructed by placing flat rocks or pieces of bark against each other. Ensure that you are able to access a lizard if needed without causing stacked rocks to collapse. Additional shelter can consist of suitably sized hollow limbs. Substrate can be either a thin layer of coarse sand, gravel or wood chips. A small potted plant can be included for that natural look.

TEMPERATURE & LIGHTING: An indoor vivarium will require an overhead, low wattage spotlight for this and 8 hours of light each day with a full spectrum UV fluorescent tube. This

needs to be replaced every six months or so to maintain its effectiveness. The basking spot should be about 34°C. Depending on cage size it may be preferable to provide more than one basking area. Experiment with different wattage globes, but if using a plastic container, ensure that the wattage is not too high, nor the globe too close, to melt the plastic.

WATER: Much of these lizards' moisture requirements will be provided by their food, however it is recommended to include a small water bowl at all times.

FOOD: These skinks can have voracious appetites. All *Egernia* species are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of insects and some vegetable matter. In captivity, live insects are the preferred option to stimulate hunting activity. Try to provide a range of insects. Mealworms, crickets and cockroaches are ideal with an occasional offering of canned pet meat (not fish), finely diced cheese, tomato, banana and lettuce leaf and non-toxic flowers such as daisies and hibiscus. Insects can be dusted with calcium/vitamin supplement. Feed once a week for adults and every 2-3 days for younger animals.

CAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR/BREEDING

Generally shy in the wild but will settle and even remain active when humans are nearby. Handling should be kept to a minimum, however they do become quite accustomed to it. Avoid disturbing the main shelter site. Sex determination is difficult, although males' pattern and colour are usually more clean and vivid. All *Egernia* species produce live young in late summer or early autumn. Breeding is improved by allowing your lizards to cool off for a month or so during winter. Any young individuals should be housed separately from adults.

These lizards are often curious in the wild. After being disturbed they will quickly take a peek to see if the danger has gone. They can sometimes be lured out from their protective cover by offerings of cheese or tomato. The crevice egernia's depressed body enables it to squeeze into the cracks in grass trees, dead logs and rock crevices. The king skink utilises similar places, but will also excavate a burrow for shelter.

DISEASES: A clean artificial reptile environment with the appropriate husbandry mentioned above will usually result in your pets remaining healthy. Quarantine newly acquired animals for at least a month before introducing them to those already being kept.

REPTILE MITES: Reptile mites are the scourge of many keepers. They can rapidly multiply and quickly kill a reptile. If an infestation is found, it is imperative that you take immediate action to eradicate it. Although small (a large female may be one-third the size of a pin head) they will be obvious on white paper as miniature black tick-like animals. If you find you have an infestation, it is important to kill it *in situ*. This can be achieved by placing a Sureguard Ministrip™ within the respective cage for at least 8 hours before cleaning. Then follow-up with two 8-hour cycles two days apart. DO NOT expose your pet to the pest strip for any longer or you may kill it.

TICKS: When first obtaining your reptile, check it for ticks. These are often seen behind the limbs and at the base of the tail. They can be removed using tweezers and the bite site dabbed with antiseptic.

FURTHER READING: *Care of Australian Reptiles in Captivity* – John Weigel. Reptile Keepers Association, Gosford, NSW.