

CAPTIVE CARE OF AMEIVAS (*Ameiva ameiva*)

Common names: Jungle Runner; Dwarf Tegu.

These colorful lizards are related to the tegu. Like the some of the tegus, they can be nervous and nippy, and some species are more aggressive than others. They need lots of room, more than their size would seem to indicate. They are quick and prone to flights of panic, at least until well acclimated.

They are found in the tropical open forests, woodlands and agricultural areas. Like the other Teiids, they have the long pointed snout, long tongue and tail. Strong limbs and long claws. Like their tegu cousins, they are diurnal, omnivorous and oviparous.

Similar to the Racetrackers (*Cnemidophorus* spp.) but have longer snouts than racetrackers.

These are active lizards, diggers and burrowers, so need a spacious enclosure with deep substrate layer, hide boxes. Some may make use of some low climbing branches or bark slabs for basking.

Males typically have turquoise blue bellies; females white. Older males develop the characteristic thick jowls.

Their tails can drop off, so take care in handling them, and don't grab them. If you need to make a grab for an ameiva, slip one hand under their pelvis, thighs and tail base, the other under their chest.

Species from heavily jungled areas will require one area of the enclosure to be kept a little damp - not wet, however. They will also enjoy regular baths and occasional spraying. Woodlands and grassland species may be kept in open woodland enclosures. They will enjoy soaking, too.

Temperatures need to be 77-87 F (25-30 C) days; nights down no lower than 68 F (20 C) on the cool side.

Feed a variety of arthropods (crickets, worms, occasional beetles) and pink mice when big enough. Some also enjoy fruits. Be sure to gut-load the invertebrates.

Like most diurnal lizards, they will benefit from UVB lighting. Some of the 15 species include:

- *A. ameiva*: Southern Mexico to Uruguay; introduced into Florida. To 20" (50 cm). Found in forest margins, brushland. Green towards the head, hind end brown. Sides with vertical white bands.
- *chrysolema*: Haiti. To 16" (40 cm). Dry, rocky coastal areas and steppes. Brown with dark brown and light green longitudinal bands; whitish green dots; snout tipped in red; chest and ventral surface black. Difficult to keep in captivity.
- *lineolata*: Haiti. Steppes. To 8" (20 cm). Vivid blue-green tail.

Sources:

Obst, F. J. The Completely Illustrated Atlas of Reptiles and Amphibians for the Terrarium. TFH Publications. 1988.

Wynne, R. H. Lizards in Captivity. TFH Publications. 1981.

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