Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Diplolaemus sexcinctus - Six-banded Patagonian lizard

Identity and range	Climate and habitat	Diet and reproduction
Valid Leiosauridae species described from Meseta Pedregosa about 10 km south of Las Bayas, Rio Negro, Argentina, at roughly 1100 m. Current records extend through western Patagonia and into southern Chile; some populations occur much higher.	Cold, windy Patagonian steppe, rocky slopes, scree and volcanic outcrops. At Las Bayas the long-term annual mean is about 6.8 C and winters can be severe. The species shelters in burrows or galleries beneath large rocks and is reported active at air temperatures around 5 C.	Oviparous and strongly carnivorous. Published field accounts describe arthropod/invertebrate feeding, saurophagy and cannibalism. Species-specific clutch size, mating timing and incubation data are poorly documented, so breeding windows below are conservative working periods.

Month	Day ambient	Night	Basking surface	UVI*	Photoperiod	Moisture	Adult food offers*	Seasonal management
Jan	7-10 C	5-7 C	Off	Off	8 h	Water check; dry refuges	None	Winter rest
Feb	7-10 C	5-7 C	Off	Off	8 h	Water check; dry refuges	None	Winter rest
Mar	9-13 C	5-8 C	32-35 C limited	1	9 h	Minimal local moisture	1-2 late	Staged warm-up
Apr	13-17 C	7-10 C	34-37 C	2	10.5 h	Light local spray 1x/wk	2-3	Reconditioning
May	16-20 C	9-12 C	36-39 C	2-3	12 h	Mostly dry; water always	3-4	Full activity / courtship watch
Jun	18-22 C	10-13 C	37-40 C	3	13.5 h	Dry; water always	4-5	Peak activity / mating watch
Jul	20-24 C	11-14 C	38-41 C	3-4	14 h	Dry; water always	4-5	Egg development watch
Aug	19-23 C	10-13 C	38-40 C	3-4	13.5 h	Provide local moist nest zone	4-5	Nesting / egg-laying watch
Sep	17-21 C	9-12 C	36-39 C	2-3	12 h	Local nest moisture only	3-4	Post-lay recovery
Oct	13-17 C	7-10 C	34-37 C	2	10.5 h	Light local spray weekly	2-3	Seasonal taper
Nov	9-13 C	5-8 C	32-34 C limited	1	9 h	Minimal; keep refuges dry	1 then stop	Cooling
Dec	7-10 C	5-7 C	Off	Off	8 h	Water check; dry refuges	None	Winter rest

Climate translation: this northern-hemisphere schedule shifts the native Patagonian warm season by about six months. Wild freezing extremes are ecological context, not captive targets; winter refuge temperatures should remain controlled and above freezing.

* Basking, UVI and feeding frequency are conservative facility starting points because direct D. sexcinctus thermal and UV preference studies were not located. The species is cold-active, so maintain a strong gradient rather than warming the whole enclosure.

Winter safety: cool only healthy adults after feeding has stopped and the gut is clear. Record mass, perform planned checks and reverse cooling for weight loss, dehydration, respiratory signs or persistent activity without normal digestion.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

A cold-adapted predatory rock-steppe lizard: secure ground refuges, a strong local basking zone, cool air, excellent ventilation and strict separation capacity are central to the model.

Enclosure and refuge design

For one adult, about 120 x 60 x 60 cm is a practical facility starting point rather than a published minimum; larger is preferred. Because saurophagy and cannibalism are documented, individual housing is the safest default. Breeding introductions should occur only under close observation with immediate separation capacity.

Build heavy rockwork directly from the enclosure base, not on loose substrate. Provide multiple low, tight shelters beneath slabs and rocks across warm and cool zones. Include open steppe-style ground, firm sandy/loamy substrate and at least one deep secure retreat.

Heat, light and UVB

No direct preferred-temperature study was located for D. sexcinctus. Use a local 38-41 C basking surface only during peak activity while keeping ambient air substantially cooler. A measured UVI around 3-4 at the basking position is a conservative operational starting point; provide retreats below UVI 1.

Water, humidity and ventilation

Keep shallow fresh water available year-round. The natural range is cold and generally dry to seasonally wetter, with wind and strong air movement. Avoid humid stagnant enclosures. Localized nest moisture or occasional light spraying is preferable to raising whole-enclosure humidity.

Diet and feeding

This is a carnivorous species. Base routine feeding on varied, well-gut-loaded invertebrates such as crickets, roaches, locusts and appropriate larvae, with calcium/mineral support matched to UVB and reproductive state. Wild saurophagy does not require routine live-lizard feeding in captivity. Avoid obesity during the cool season.

Social management and keeper safety

Treat adults as potentially territorial and predatory toward conspecifics. Never assume pair compatibility. Introduce only during the active/breeding season, provide duplicate refuges and basking access, and separate immediately for biting, sustained pursuit, refuge blocking or feeding suppression.

Daily keeper checks

Check	Record
Activity	Emergence, basking duration, refuge choice and locomotion
Feeding	Prey types, intake, water and faeces
Condition	Mass trend, jaw, eyes, skin, toes, limbs and wounds
Environment	Basking surface, warm/cool air, UVI and refuge temperature

Veterinary triggers

Seek reptile-veterinary assessment for persistent weight loss, weakness, abnormal breathing, bite wounds, jaw or limb swelling, failure to bask after warm-up, continued activity during deep cooling, or a female showing repeated digging/straining without laying. Quarantine and faecal screening are prudent for all new animals.

Breeding, Oviparity and Evidence Review

Oviparity is confirmed, but species-specific clutch size, nesting dates and incubation conditions remain poorly documented. Treat the breeding windows below as working hypotheses and record every event.

Seasonal breeding management

Warm conditioned adults gradually through March and April. The May-June courtship/mating and July-August egg-development/nesting windows on this shifted northern-hemisphere calendar are conservative working periods inferred from Patagonian seasonality, not published D. sexcinctus breeding dates.

Use visual contact through a divider before direct introduction. Provide at least two secure shelters and feeding points. Separate immediately for sustained pursuit, biting, refuge blocking or any attempt to seize the partner as prey.

Nesting and eggs

Provide a secluded diggable nesting zone before females become visibly gravid: firm soil/sand that holds a tunnel without becoming wet. Species-specific clutch size and incubation temperature were not located in the literature. If eggs are produced, record lay date, egg mass and dimensions, maintain orientation, and treat incubation as an evidence-building protocol rather than assuming tropical-lizard values.

Hatchlings

House hatchlings separately or in carefully monitored small groups because predation and cannibalism are documented in the genus/species accounts. Provide narrow rock shelters, modest local basking, measured UVB, constant water and appropriately sized gut-loaded invertebrates. Record hatch date, mass, length, first feed and first shed.

Evidence confidence

Topic	Confidence and application
Identity / range	High: original description, Reptile Database and Argentine park records
Habitat / cold activity	High-moderate: field-guide synthesis and protected-area records
Diet / cannibalism	High-moderate: repeated published natural-history accounts
Climate	Moderate-high: Las Bayas / Pilcaniyeu long-term climate used as locality context
Thermal / UV / enclosure	Low-moderate: conservative facility starting points; no direct preference study located
Breeding timing / incubation	Low: oviparity confirmed, timing and incubation remain evidence-poor

How climate was translated

The type locality near Las Bayas is around 1100 m. Long-term station summaries describe a mean annual temperature near 6.8 C with very cold snowy winters and mild summers; nearby Pilcaniyeu climate data show average summer highs around 21 C and winter lows near -4 C. Captive winter values are intentionally milder and above freezing while preserving a pronounced seasonal rest.

Record set for every breeding attempt

Individual IDs and provenance; dates of cooling and warm-up; mass trend; prey intake; basking and refuge use; introduction dates; courtship; confirmed mating; digging; lay date; clutch size; egg mass and dimensions; incubation method; hatch date; neonatal measurements; and female recovery.

Key references

1. Cei, Scolaro & Videla (2003), FACENA 19:137-155 - original taxonomic treatment and type locality.
2. Reptile Database - current taxonomy, distribution and oviparity.
3. SIB, Administracion de Parques Nacionales Argentina - habitat, cold activity, carnivory, saurophagy and cannibalism.
4. Las Bayas / Pilcaniyeu long-term climate summaries - seasonal climate translation only.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Diplolaemus sexcinctus

Your measuring point

Measure UVI at normal back height directly beneath the brightest accessible part of the optional T5 strip. Place the strip toward the middle/back with free access to and away from it; preserve a gradient into fully covered refuges near UVI 0. These numbers describe the exposure area, not the whole enclosure or a daily average.

Measure and adjust

1. Use a UV Index meter. A Solarmeter 6.5/6.5R or equivalent UVI meter is suitable. Broadband UVB readings in microwatts/cm2 cannot be substituted for UVI.

2. Measure the installed arrangement. Warm the tube for about 30 minutes. Keep the reflector, guards and mesh in their normal positions. With the animal elsewhere, hold the sensor at its normal back height, aimed toward the tube.

3. Adjust the fixture. Begin near the lower part of a newly selected working range and adjust gradually. Respect the lamp manufacturer's minimum distance. Recheck after each change and check every higher accessible branch, rock or platform.

4. Keep a full gradient. Provide usable exposure across the animal's body, lower-UVI areas and fully covered refuges near UVI 0. For daytime baskers, overlap the UV area with visible light and appropriate basking warmth while retaining cooler shade.

5. Record and recheck. Log UVI, measuring point, tube-to-back distance, tube age and lamp-on time. Recheck through the year and after changes to the tube, reflector, mesh or furnishings. Exposure duration and behaviour also determine dose.

A T5 range is a working exposure target, not a whole-cage setting, measured wild monthly average, guaranteed optimum or proven safety ceiling. The animal must be able to enter and leave freely.

Monthly target at normal back height

Month	UVI under T5 when on
January	Off
February	Off
March	1
April	2
May	2-3
June	3
July	3-4
August	3-4
September	2-3
October	2
November	1
December	Off

Retain numbers; clarify measurement
The retained range remains a provisional captive working target. No new species-specific result was found that clearly requires a numerical change. Retaining it is not certification of an experimentally established optimum.

Evidence level: Provisional retention. The seasonal schedule is a captive operating plan; it is not measured wild monthly UV. Off means the existing planned UVB-off/rest phase is preserved. Any staged Off/1 entry still means gradual reintroduction.

UV references: Baines et al. (2016), UV-Tool; Muryn, Baines and Dishman (2026), Reptile Lighting Guide V10. Full rationale and monthly comparison: UVI_Audit_Report.html.