Recommended Annual Breeding Schedule

Egernia cunninghami - Cunningham's skink

Habitat basis	Thermal principle	Breeding anchor
Rock outcrops and wooded slopes of southeastern Australia, with animals using deep ledges and crevices as stable family refuges.	A diurnal rock-basking skink with a preferred body temperature near 34-35 C. A warm surface must be paired with shaded crevices and a cooler air zone.	On this Netherlands-shifted calendar, mating is centred on April-May and the single annual litter is expected mainly July-August, sometimes into September.

Month	Day ambient	Night	Basking surface	UVI at bask	Photoperiod	Heat / UV hours	Feeding	Seasonal management
Jan	10-13 C	7-10 C	Off	Off	9 h	0 h	None	Core cooling - healthy adults
Feb	12-16 C	8-11 C	Off; 30-32 C late	Off; 1-2 late	9 h 30 m	0 to 3 h	None; restart late	Staged emergence late month
Mar	18-22 C	10-13 C	32-35 C	2-3	10 h 30 m	6 h	2-3 feeds weekly	Emergence / conditioning
Apr	22-25 C	12-15 C	34-37 C	3-4	11 h 30 m	8 h	3-4 feeds weekly	Courtship / mating
May	24-27 C	14-17 C	36-38 C	3-5	12 h 30 m	9 h	4-5 feeds weekly	Peak mating
Jun	25-28 C	16-18 C	36-39 C	4-5	13 h 30 m	10 h	4-5 feeds weekly	Gestation
Jul	26-29 C	17-19 C	37-40 C	4-5	14 h	10 h	4-5 feeds weekly	Births may begin
Aug	25-28 C	16-18 C	37-39 C	4-5	13 h 30 m	9 h	4-5 feeds weekly	Peak births / recovery
Sep	23-26 C	14-17 C	35-38 C	3-4	12 h 30 m	8 h	4 feeds weekly	Late births / recovery
Oct	19-23 C	11-14 C	32-35 C	2-3	11 h	6 h	2-3 feeds; taper	Autumn transition
Nov	14-18 C	8-11 C	28-32 C; then off	1-2; then off	10 h	3 h to 0	Taper; stop after gut clears	Pre-cooling
Dec	10-13 C	7-10 C	Off	Off	9 h	0 h	None	Core cooling - monitor weekly

Humidity: use strong ventilation and mostly dry basking rock, with a practical active-season baseline near 35-55% RH by day and 50-70% overnight. Maintain at least one slightly humid retreat and fresh water at all times.

Cooling caution: provenance matters. The table is a conservative mid-range starting point, not permission to expose unknown-locality animals to frost. Cool only healthy, well-conditioned adults; weigh weekly and reverse the cycle if an animal remains active or loses excessive mass.

Practical Husbandry and Social Management

This revision preserves the supplied seasonal concept while adding provenance limits, safer cooling, measured gradients and group-management safeguards.

Enclosure and group management

A practical working minimum is approximately **150 x 75 x 75 cm for one adult or an established compatible pair**, with **180 x 90 x 90 cm or larger preferred**. Family groups require substantially more floor and retreat space, multiple basking ledges and several feeding positions.

Wild sociality does not guarantee that unfamiliar captive adults will accept one another. Introduce cautiously and monitor for chasing, crevice exclusion, bite injuries, suppressed basking, reduced feeding or weight loss. Separate promptly when these signs persist.

Basking, light and UVB

Create a broad rock surface around **35-40 C** during full activity, with warm air in the mid-20s and shaded retreats below the low-20s when seasonally appropriate. Published thermal work places preferred body temperature near **34-35 C**; the rock surface is an energy source, not the target body temperature.

A measured **UVI 3-5** at the principal basking position is a practical open-rock target, with a gradient below UVI 1 inside crevices. This is a husbandry inference rather than a published species-specific Ferguson-zone allocation.

Rockwork, substrate and water

Build all heavy rockwork directly from the enclosure floor and lock it mechanically so digging cannot cause collapse. Provide ledges and crevices that allow full-body contact while still permitting keeper inspection. A compactable soil-sand substrate of roughly **10-15 cm** supports digging and humidity buffering.

Keep a shallow, stable bowl of fresh water available and replace it daily. Maintain a slightly humid refuge for shedding, but allow exposed rock and the general enclosure to dry between light misting or watering events.

Diet and supplementation

Adults are strongly plant-dominant in the wild, with published summaries placing plant material at about **92.8%** of the adult diet. Base captive feeding on varied leafy greens, safe weeds and flowers: dandelion, endive, escarole, chicory, collard, mustard and turnip greens, plus pesticide-free hibiscus or nasturtium.

Juveniles take proportionally more invertebrates. Offer appropriately sized, gut-loaded roaches, crickets, locusts, silkworms and snails more frequently to growing animals; for adults, keep invertebrates a minor seasonal component rather than the dietary base. Egg and vertebrate foods are optional and rare.

Use plain calcium on most growing-season feeds and a low-frequency multivitamin according to product strength. Avoid routine high-dose vitamin D3 when measured UVB is effective. Adjust quantity to body condition; these heavy-bodied skinks become obese easily in captivity.

Period	Feeding management
Dec-Jan	No food during established, inactive cooling
Late Feb-Mar	Restart only after normal heat, basking and activity return
Apr-Sep	Plant food 4-5 days weekly; juveniles may receive small daily meals
Oct	Reduce portions and frequency as heat hours decline
November	Stop before core cooling and allow complete gut clearance

Winter cooling

Use a gradual 4-6 week autumn reduction in food, heat and day length. For unknown or mixed provenance, a stable core range around **8-12 C** is safer than deliberately targeting near-freezing nights. Turn basking and UVB off only after the gut is clear and the animals have settled.

Cool only healthy adults with good reserves. Record body mass weekly without repeatedly disturbing the retreat. Restore the active cycle if there is sustained activity, dehydration, respiratory noise, marked weight loss or other illness. Juveniles, gravid females and compromised animals should not be forced through the same cooling regime.

Breeding, Neonates and Accuracy Review

Field life-history is translated six months so that emergence, mating and births align with the controlled Netherlands season.

Reproductive timing

Published summaries place mating around **November** and births in **January-February** in the Southern Hemisphere. Shifted by six months, the principal captive target becomes **May mating and July-August births**. Some variation into April or September is expected with locality, condition and the exact cooling profile.

The species is viviparous and normally produces **one litter annually**. Reviews commonly report **1-8 young**, while the Australian Museum records a wider **1-11** range. Females need quiet, secure crevices and should not be handled unnecessarily late in gestation.

Neonates and family groups

Newborns are approximately 57-70 mm SVL in published summaries and may remain within the family aggregation. Provide neonatal-width crevices, several low basking options and finely divided food. Confirm that every youngster feeds and gains weight; remove any neonate that is bitten, excluded or unable to thermoregulate safely.

Sexual maturity is slow, with published husbandry summaries placing mature size near 190-200 mm SVL at roughly five years. Do not rush breeding by overfeeding juveniles.

What was corrected from the supplied file

Supplied point	Review and revision
Night minima of 3-5 C	Raised to a cautious 7-10 C core range; colder exposure now requires known provenance and specialist justification.
Fixed 36-38 C seasonal basking	Retained as a range but expanded to 35-40 C, with preferred body temperature and escape-gradient warnings.
UVI 4-5 stated as established	Presented as a practical UVI 3-5 husbandry inference, with retreats below UVI 1.
Social groups treated as inherently safe	Added compatibility monitoring and explicit separation triggers for unfamiliar or unstable groups.
Adults about 93% plant material	Evidence retained, but translated into a varied plant-dominant captive diet rather than a rigid percentage.
Minimum 120 x 60 x 60 cm	Replaced with a larger working minimum and substantially more space for groups.

Key references

1. Australian Museum. Cunningham's Skink species account: distribution, habitat and litter range. australian.museum/learn/animals/reptiles/cunninghams-skink

2. Chapple, D.G. (2003). Ecology, life-history, and behavior in the Australian scincid genus Egernia. Herpetological Monographs 17:145-180. biology-assets.anu.edu.au/hosted_sites/Scott/2003chapplehm.pdf

3. Stow, A.J. & Sunnucks, P. (2004). High mate and site fidelity in Cunningham's skinks. Molecular Ecology 13:419-430. doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-294X.2003.02061.x

4. Johnson, C.R. (1977). Thermoregulation in four Australian lizards of the genus Egernia. Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society 60:381-390. doi.org/10.1111/j.1096-3642.1977.tb00842.x

5. New Zealand Herpetological Society. Egernia cunninghami account: reproductive timing, neonate size and ontogenetic diet. reptiles.org.nz/herpetofauna/exotic-pet/egernia-cunninghami

Important: This is a practical evidence-informed protocol, not a controlled experimental standard. Locality, age, condition, enclosure size and room climate affect the safest seasonal settings. Use thermostatic control, independent thermometers and a UV meter, and change all seasonal parameters gradually.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Egernia cunninghami

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; 1-2 late
March	2-3
April	3-4
May	3-5
June	4-5
July	4-5
August	4-5
September	3-4
October	2-3
November	1-2; then off
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.