Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Leiocephalus schreibersii - Red-sided curlytail / Hispaniolan khaki curlytail

Identity and range	*Leiocephalus schreibersii* is native to Hispaniola (Haiti and parts of the Dominican Republic) and Ile de la Tortue, with introduced populations in southern Florida. It is especially characteristic of hot, xeric lowlands, open rocky ground and dry scrub from sea level to roughly 500 m.
Climate and annual cycle	A tropical, year-round-active species rather than a true brumator. Southwestern Dominican field sites are hot and dry with a bimodal rainfall pattern: a smaller spring peak and a larger late-summer/fall peak. Captive breeding literature supports only a short, mild cool/low-light phase, not cold winter dormancy.
Diet and reproduction	Primarily an invertebrate feeder. Ants, beetle larvae, other hymenopterans and spiders are important wild prey. Scientific reproductive data give a mean clutch of about 2.47 eggs (range 1-4), while established terrarium accounts report 4-6 eggs; incubation around 27-30 C for roughly eight weeks is reported in captivity.

MONTH	DAY AMBIENT	NIGHT	BASKING	UVI*	PHOTOPERIOD	RH DAY / NIGHT*	SPRAY / RAIN	FOOD*	SEASONAL MANAGEMENT
January	18-22 C	17-19 C	Off	Off / 1	9 h	50-65 / 65-75%	Light morning mist 2x/wk	0-1	Short cool / low-light phase
February	24-27 C	19-21 C	36-40 C	3-4	11 h	45-60 / 60-75%	Morning mist 2-3x/wk	3-4	Wake-up / courtship
March	25-28 C	20-22 C	38-42 C	4-5	12 h	45-60 / 60-75%	Morning mist 2-3x/wk	4-5	Courtship / mating
April	26-29 C	21-23 C	39-43 C	4-5	12 h 30 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Morning mist; moist nest	4-5	Mating / follicles
May	27-30 C	22-24 C	40-44 C	4-5	13 h	45-60 / 60-75%	Mist 2-3x/wk; moist nest	4-5	Main laying period
June	27-31 C	22-24 C	40-44 C	4-5	13 h 15 m	50-65 / 65-80%	Rain pulse 3x/wk	4-5	Laying / incubation
July	27-31 C	23-25 C	40-44 C	4-5	13 h	50-65 / 65-80%	Rain pulse 3-4x/wk	4-5	Incubation / hatching
August	27-31 C	23-25 C	40-44 C	4-5	12 h 45 m	50-65 / 65-80%	Rain pulse 3-4x/wk	4	Hatching / possible repeat laying
September	26-30 C	22-24 C	39-43 C	4	12 h	50-65 / 65-80%	Mist 3x/wk	4	Recovery / late wet-season activity
October	25-29 C	21-23 C	38-42 C	3-4	11 h 30 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Morning mist 2-3x/wk	3-4	Recovery / conditioning
November	24-27 C	20-22 C	36-40 C	3	11 h	45-60 / 60-75%	Morning mist 2x/wk	3	Dry-season taper
December	22-25 C	18-20 C	32-36 C brief	1-2	10 h	50-65 / 65-75%	Light morning mist	2 then taper	Pre-rest / gut-lightening

Calendar: Northern Hemisphere. *UVI, RH and feeding frequency are operational captive starting points, not species-wide field measurements. January represents an optional 3-4 week breeding-conditioning phase for healthy adults only. Do not use cold brumation. Maintain a slightly moist lower substrate layer and fresh water throughout the year.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

A hot, terrestrial Caribbean curlytail: very bright basking, deep burrowing substrate, dry exposed surfaces and protected subsurface moisture.

Enclosure and structure

A strongly terrestrial, burrowing lizard. For one adult, about 120 x 60 x 60 cm or larger is a useful indoor starting point; a compatible breeding pair benefits from about 150 x 70 x 70 cm or more. Provide stable rocks, cork, low branches, several hides and at least 15-20 cm of diggable sand/soil. Older husbandry literature specifically notes underground burrows and recommends no less than 15 cm of sand.

Heat, gradient and UVB

Preferred body temperature is about 36.3 C and active wild animals average close to 36 C. During the active season provide a local 40-44 C basking surface, but keep a broad air gradient with substantial areas around 24-28 C. UVI 4-5 at the main basking zone is a practical starting target rather than a direct field measurement; shade below UVI 1 must always be available.

Humidity and water

This is a dry-region species, but dry does not mean desiccated. Morning misting can simulate dew, while the lower substrate layers should remain slightly moist so the animals can select a cooler, more humid burrow. Let exposed surfaces dry fully between mistings. Keep fresh drinking water available.

Seasonal breeding stimulus

Do not cold-brumate this tropical species. A long-standing captive protocol reduces the normal 12-14 hour day to 8-10 hours for 3-4 weeks and allows temperatures to settle around 18-22 C with basking heat off. After gradual warming and day-length increase, mating often follows. Use this only with healthy, well-conditioned adults; juveniles should remain warm and feeding.

Nest provision

Provide a deep, cohesive but free-draining nest zone of sand/soil that can hold a tunnel without being wet. Females excavate a burrow and deposit soft-shelled eggs underground. Maintain the deeper layer lightly moist and check suspected nest sites carefully rather than repeatedly collapsing tunnels.

Adult diet

Use varied gut-loaded invertebrates as the staple: crickets, locusts, roaches, beetle larvae in moderation, flies, silkworms and other suitable prey. Wild stomachs contained especially many ants plus beetle larvae, other hymenopterans and spiders. Occasional soft fruit or flowers may be sampled, but plant food should not displace the insect-based diet.

Juvenile diet

Feed appropriately sized live prey frequently during growth, with measured calcium/mineral supplementation and full-spectrum lighting. Juveniles need small secure hides and access to the same subsurface moisture gradient as adults. Avoid oversized prey and do not allow feeder insects to remain with eggs or tiny hatchlings.

Social management

Both sexes can defend territories from same-sex conspecifics. Do not house adult males together. A pair is the safest breeding arrangement; one male with several females can work only in a substantially larger, highly structured enclosure. Provide duplicate basking and feeding sites and immediate separation capacity.

Daily keeper checks

Check basking behavior, gait, eyes/nose, mouth, skin, hydration, body condition, feeding response, faeces and digging activity. Gravid females should have uninterrupted access to a moist nest zone. Watch carefully for bite wounds, persistent chasing or one animal being excluded from heat or shelter.

Heat warning

These lizards are exceptionally heat-tolerant and may remain active during intense midday sun, but captivity must still provide a genuine escape from heat. Never use high whole-enclosure temperatures to chase a body-temperature target. Measure the basking surface separately from ambient air and keep shaded burrows markedly cooler.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

Field ecology and reproductive datasets are strong; detailed incubation values come mainly from established terrarium literature and should be treated as a practical starting point.

Breeding timing

Wild reproduction is not documented as a single narrow temperate-season event, and a Florida life-history review describes Hispaniolan L. schreibersii as apparently asynchronous in egg laying. In captivity, a short annual light/temperature reduction followed by warming is a useful stimulus. Expect courtship soon after the warm season is restored.

Clutch size and maturity

A comparative Dominican dataset found females mature at about 51.4 mm SVL and a mean clutch size of 2.47 eggs, with 1-4 eggs represented in the scientific sample. Older terrarium breeding accounts commonly report 4-6 eggs, and occasional husbandry sources report larger clutches. Treat small repeated clutches as normal and manage female calcium/body condition accordingly.

Incubation

Established European terrarium literature reports roughly 27-30 C and about eight weeks to hatching. A conservative starting point is 28-29 C in slightly moist vermiculite/perlite or a comparable aerated medium. Avoid free water touching the eggs, large daily temperature swings and prolonged overheating.

Egg moisture

Eggs are soft-shelled and are deposited in a self-dug tunnel. The incubation medium should remain evenly moist and aerated rather than wet. In the enclosure, keep the nest layer more humid than the exposed surface. Remove overlooked crickets or roaches because feeder insects can damage eggs.

Hatchlings

Rear hatchlings with abundant small hides, a shallow moisture gradient, strong but escapable light/UV, and a small basking area rather than adult-level heat across the entire enclosure. Offer frequent tiny live prey and monitor hydration and growth closely.

Accepted name and range - High

The Reptile Database and current North American herpetological references recognize Leiocephalus schreibersii (Gravenhorst, 1838), native to Hispaniola and Ile de la Tortue with introduced populations in Florida.

Xeric open habitat - High

Nelson et al. documented L. schreibersii as common at a rain-shadow site in Barahona, Dominican Republic, especially in very open, sparsely vegetated ground; rainfall there is bimodal with a smaller spring and larger late-summer/fall peak.

Body temperature about 36 C - High

Comparative thermal datasets report a selected temperature of about 36.3 C and active wild body temperatures around 36 C. The 2001 field study also found the species maintained body temperature well above local substrate and air temperatures.

Diet primarily invertebrates - High

Stomach-content work found ants numerically dominant, with beetle larvae, other hymenopterans, spiders and other arthropods represented. Plant material is secondary/occasional.

Mean clutch 2.47 eggs; 1-4 - High

Gifford & Powell (2007) reported a mean clutch of 2.47 +/- 0.72 eggs for L. schreibersii in a Dominican comparative dataset; clutches across the studied Leiocephalus were 1-4 eggs.

Short 18-22 C rest; 4-6 eggs; 27-30 C / ~8 wk - Moderate

These are established terrarium-breeding values from German husbandry literature, not controlled field experiments. They are useful operational starting points and should be adjusted to animal condition and facility response.

UVI 4-5 / basking surface 40-44 C - Moderate

Operational translation from strong heliothermy and a 36.3 C preferred body temperature. These are not direct species-wide field UVI or surface-temperature measurements.

Key references: Reptile Database (accessed 2026); Schreiber et al. 1993, Florida Scientist 56:82-90; Nelson et al. 2001, Contemporary Herpetology 2001:1-14; Gifford & Powell 2007, Journal of Herpetology 41:521-527; Meshaka et al. 2006, Herpetological Conservation and Biology 1:109-115; Holtmann 2005, AQUALOGnews 63:7-10; Köhler et al. 2016, Zootaxa 4121:517-532.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Leiocephalus schreibersii

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 / 1
February	3-4
March	4-5
April	4-5
May	4-5
June	4-5
July	4-5
August	4-5
September	4
October	3-4
November	3
December	1-2

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.