Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Pristidactylus torquatus - Southern growler / forest lizard

Identity and habitat	Thermal biology	Humidity and reproduction
Endemic to Chile, principally associated with cool mountain Nothofagus forest from central-southern Chile into Los Rios. Uses trunks, hollow logs, tree bases, rocks and shrubs; northern records also occur in sclerophyll forest.	A cool forest thermoconformer. Published work reports mean spring-summer substrate near 19.4 C, field body temperatures much lower than open-habitat congeners, and laboratory-selected temperatures near 28 C. Avoid high whole-enclosure heat.	Oviparous. Chilean authorities report 5-6 elongate eggs laid in January-February native season, under logs or in loose sun-warmed sand. Eggs are reported to hatch after the cool season / following summer. RH targets below are captive working targets, not measured field RH.

Month	Day ambient	Night	Basking	UVI*	Photoperiod	RH day / night*	Spray / rain	Food offers*	Status / breeding
Jan	8-12 C	5-8 C	Off	Off	8.5 h	65-80 / 80-90%	Light rain 1-2x/wk	None	Winter rest
Feb	8-12 C	5-8 C	Off	Off	9 h	65-80 / 80-90%	Light rain 1-2x/wk	None	Winter rest
Mar	12-16 C	7-10 C	28-30 C limited	1-2	10 h	60-75 / 75-90%	2 light sprays/wk	1-2 late	Staged warm-up
Apr	15-18 C	9-12 C	30-32 C	2	11 h	55-70 / 70-85%	2-3 sprays/wk	2-3	Full activity begins
May	17-20 C	10-13 C	31-33 C	2-3	12.5 h	50-65 / 65-80%	2-3 sprays/wk	3	Courtship / territoriality
Jun	18-22 C	11-14 C	31-34 C	2-3	14 h	50-65 / 65-80%	2-3 sprays/wk	3-4	Peak activity / breeding
Jul	19-23 C	12-15 C	32-34 C	2-3	14.5 h	50-65 / 65-80%	2-3 sprays/wk	3-4	Nesting window begins
Aug	18-22 C	11-14 C	31-33 C	2-3	13.5 h	50-65 / 65-80%	2-3 sprays/wk + moist nest	3-4	Egg-laying / female recovery
Sep	16-20 C	10-13 C	30-32 C	2	12 h	55-70 / 70-85%	3 light sprays/wk	2-3	Post-lay active period
Oct	14-18 C	8-11 C	29-31 C	1-2	10.5 h	60-75 / 75-90%	2-3 sprays/wk	1-2	Autumn taper
Nov	10-14 C	6-9 C	28-30 C limited	1	9 h	60-75 / 75-90%	2 light sprays/wk	1 then stop	Cooling down
Dec	8-12 C	5-8 C	Off	Off	8.5 h	65-80 / 80-90%	Light rain 1-2x/wk	None	Winter rest

Climate translation: native activity is reported broadly from October-April. This keeper calendar shifts the Southern Hemisphere annual cycle by about six months for the Netherlands. Wild locality climates vary across the broad range; the table models a cool humid Nothofagus-forest population rather than a hot lowland setup.

* RH and UVI values are evidence-informed captive working targets because species-specific field RH and UV measurements were not located. Keep high air exchange, surfaces able to dry between spray events, and at least one humid hollow/log refuge.

Thermal note: P. torquatus is a cool forest lizard. Use a modest local basking patch, not desert-style 40+ C basking or warm room air. Provide shade immediately adjacent to basking and monitor actual surface temperature with an IR thermometer.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

Cool, humid temperate-forest husbandry: vertical structure, hollow refuges, moderate basking, regular light rainfall and excellent ventilation.

Enclosure and refuge design

For one adult, about 120 x 70 x 80 cm or larger is a practical starting point; greater height is valuable because the species is frequently arboreal and saxicolous. Provide thick branches, bark slabs, hollow cork/log refuges, secure rock shelves and deep leaf litter. Offer shaded cavities at several heights and a ground-level hide.

Heat, light and UVB

Published forest animals are cool-running. Use a local 30-34 C basking surface during peak activity while keeping most air near 17-22 C. A measured UVI around 2-3 at the best basking position is a conservative working target; dense shade and hollow refuges should be below UVI 1. Avoid heating the whole enclosure to tropical values.

Humidity, rain and ventilation

Maintain moderate-high humidity without stagnant wetness. A practical active-season target is roughly 50-70% RH by day with 65-85% overnight rises. Use 2-3 light rain/spray events weekly, wetting leaves, bark and part of the forest floor, then allow exposed surfaces to dry. Keep one hollow/refuge slightly more humid. In winter, cooler air may naturally raise RH; reduce wetting rather than creating cold saturated substrate.

Seasonal cooling

Healthy adults should receive a clear cool season after food has stopped and the gut has cleared. The table uses controlled winter nights around 5-8 C and days around 8-12 C, above freezing. Maintain hydration and planned visual/weight checks. Reverse cooling if an animal loses excessive mass or develops respiratory signs.

Diet

Primarily insectivorous, especially beetles, with published predation on small lizards and other large arthropods. Use varied gut-loaded roaches, crickets, locusts, beetles/larvae and other suitable invertebrates. Do not use live lizards as routine prey. Dust calcium appropriately and avoid mealworm-heavy feeding.

Feeding rhythm

Feed leanly and regularly through the active season, increasing during courtship, follicular development and female recovery. Reduce food through autumn taper and stop before winter cooling. Resume slowly only after consistent basking and normal digestion return.

Social management

Males are territorial and may defend trunks, refuges and basking sites. Individual housing is the safest default when compatibility is unknown. For breeding introductions, provide duplicate refuges and visual barriers and supervise closely. Separate immediately for biting, repeated pursuit, refuge exclusion, suppressed feeding or weight loss.

Daily keeper checks

Confirm alert posture, clear eyes/nose, normal grip and climbing, strong but not frantic basking response, clean vent, water availability, functioning UV/heat, and that humid refuges are moist rather than wet. Record appetite, mass trend, skin condition and any territorial aggression.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

Oviparous forest breeder; published egg timing suggests a prolonged cool-season incubation rather than a short tropical incubation model.

Reproductive mode

Oviparity is established. Chilean Ministry of Environment sources report females laying 5-6 elongate eggs in January-February in the native Southern Hemisphere season, under logs or in loose sun-warmed sand. In this Northern Hemisphere-shifted programme that corresponds approximately to July-August.

Nesting provision

From early summer, provide a secluded nest area with loose but cohesive soil/sand/leaf-litter mix, deep enough for excavation and positioned where the female can choose warmer or cooler sectors. Maintain the nest substrate slightly moist, not wet. Also keep hollow-log and under-bark sites available because eggs are reported beneath logs as well as in loose soil.

Incubation caution

Published Chilean accounts say hatching occurs after winter / in the following summer, implying a long seasonal incubation with a cool phase. Do not assume a standard 60-90 day tropical-lizard incubation. If eggs are produced, record lay date, mass, dimensions and exact incubation conditions and use a conservative seasonal protocol with expert oversight rather than high constant temperatures.

Hatchlings

House hatchlings separately or in carefully observed small groups. Provide narrow bark/rock refuges, moderate local basking, measured low-moderate UVB, constant water, frequent small invertebrates and a more humid retreat for shedding. Record hatch date, mass, SVL, first shed and first voluntary feed.

Evidence confidence

Topic	Confidence and application
Taxonomy / range	High: Chilean Ministry of Environment and Reptile Database
Forest habitat	High: Nothofagus association and arboreal/saxicolous use repeatedly documented
Thermal biology	High-moderate: direct Pristidactylus thermoregulation/activity studies
Diet	Moderate-high: beetle/invertebrate diet and occasional vertebrate predation documented
Oviparity / 5-6 eggs	Moderate-high: official Chilean species account / field guides
RH / spray targets	Moderate-low: husbandry translation from humid forest ecology; direct field RH not found
Incubation settings	Low: seasonal hatching reported, but precise temperature/moisture protocol not located

Published thermal context

Forest animals were collected in a humid oceanic-Mediterranean region. Mean spring-summer substrate temperature was about 19.4 C. Comparative work found P. torquatus about 5 C cooler in the field than the open-habitat P. volcanensis; laboratory thermal gradients produced selected body temperatures around 28 C. This supports a cool enclosure with a modest local heat source.

Legal / conservation note

Pristidactylus torquatus is endemic to Chile and classified as Vulnerable nationally. Keep complete provenance and legal documentation for all animals and offspring. Do not assume that captive possession or transfer rules are the same across countries.

Key references

1. Chilean Ministry of Environment species account (2026): taxonomy, Nothofagus habitat, oviparity, 5-6 eggs and nesting timing. 2. Labra and colleagues: thermoregulation, diel activity and forest thermal environment. 3. Reptile Database: current taxonomy and oviparity. 4. Chilean center-south reptile field guides: habitat, diet, territoriality and reproduction.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Pristidactylus torquatus

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	1-2
April	2
May	2-3
June	2-3
July	2-3
August	2-3
September	2
October	1-2
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.