Recommended Annual Husbandry Schedule

Timon lepidus - Ocellated lizard / jewelled lizard

Identity and range

One of Europe's largest lacertids. Native across most of Portugal and Spain, Andorra, southern France and NW Italy. SE Iberia is occupied by the separate Timon nevadensis; several subspecies occur within T. lepidus.

Climate and annual cycle

Strongly seasonal Mediterranean-temperate cycle. Activity peaks from spring through early autumn, with true winter hibernation in colder populations. Mild coastal animals may emerge on warm winter days, so origin should guide cooling length.

Diet and reproduction

Mainly invertebrates, including snails, with seasonal fruit. Oviparous: spring courtship and mating, summer laying, and hatchlings commonly appearing in early autumn.

MONTH	DAY AMBIENT	NIGHT	BASKING	UVI*	PHOTOPERIOD	RH DAY / NIGHT*	SPRAY / RAIN	FOOD*	SEASONAL MANAGEMENT
January	7-10 C	5-8 C	Off	Off	9 h 45 m	55-65 / 70-80%	Local moisture only	None	Brumation
February	7-11 C	5-8 C	Off	Off	10 h 30 m	55-65 / 70-80%	Local moisture only	None	Brumation; staged wake late
March	18-22 C	10-13 C	35-38 C	2-3	11 h 45 m	50-60 / 65-75%	Light mist 2x/wk	2-3	Warm-up / conditioning
April	21-25 C	12-15 C	38-41 C	3-4	13 h	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 1-2x/wk	3-4	Courtship
May	24-28 C	14-17 C	40-43 C	4-5	14 h	40-55 / 55-70%	Light mist; moist nest	4-5	Mating / follicles
June	26-30 C	16-19 C	41-44 C	4-5	14 h 45 m	35-50 / 50-65%	Mostly dry; moist nest	4-5	Gravid / early laying
July	28-32 C	18-21 C	42-45 C	4-5	14 h 30 m	35-50 / 50-65%	Dry surface; moist nest	4-5	Peak laying / incubation
August	27-31 C	18-21 C	41-44 C	4-5	13 h 30 m	35-50 / 50-65%	Dry surface; moist retreat	4	Incubation / recovery
September	24-28 C	16-19 C	39-42 C	3-4	12 h 30 m	40-55 / 55-70%	Light mist 1x/wk	3-4	Hatchlings / recovery
October	20-24 C	12-16 C	36-39 C	2-3	11 h 15 m	45-60 / 60-75%	Light mist 1-2x/wk	2-3	Autumn conditioning
November	14-18 C	8-11 C	30-34 C limited	1-2	10 h 15 m	50-65 / 65-80%	Local moisture	1-2 then stop	Gut-clearance / cooling
December	7-10 C	5-8 C	Off	Off	9 h 30 m	55-65 / 70-80%	Local moisture only	None	Brumation

Calendar: native range and the Netherlands are both in the Northern Hemisphere, so the native month sequence is retained. * UVI and RH values are operational captive starting points, not direct species-wide measurements. Food is feeding days per week during activity. Deep winter cooling is for healthy, conditioned adults only; stop feeding before full cooling, maintain hydration and never allow freezing.

Practical Husbandry and Daily Management

Mediterranean lacertid husbandry: intense local basking, deep refuges, summer dryness and a controlled winter rest.

Enclosure and structure

For one adult, about 180 x 80 x 80 cm or larger is a practical starting point; a breeding pair benefits from roughly 240 x 100 x 100 cm or more. Provide broad open basking areas, stable rocks, cork, dense cover and multiple secure refuges. Use 20-30 cm of diggable soil/sand/clay where possible, with a deeper nesting area for females.

Heat, gradient and UVB

The species has a measured active preferred body temperature near 35.3 C. Use overhead radiant heat to create an escapable basking surface around 40-45 C during peak activity while preserving a substantially cooler retreat. Peak UVI 3-5 is a cautious captive starting range; direct species-specific field UVI measurements are lacking, so deep shade below UVI 1 must always be available.

Humidity and seasonal rainfall

Do not keep the whole enclosure wet, but do not make it uniformly bone-dry. Mediterranean summers are dry, while winter and spring are wetter. Keep exposed surfaces fairly dry in summer with a slightly moist deep refuge and fresh drinking water. Increase localized moisture in spring and autumn and keep the nest zone slightly moist but never saturated.

Winter brumation

Field hibernacula in southern France have held sleeping adults at roughly 3-6 C even when outside air fell below freezing. For captive breeding adults, a controlled 5-10 C winter rest from about December through February is conservative and safer than exposing animals to freezing conditions. Cool only healthy, well-conditioned adults after complete gut clearance.

Nest provision

By late spring, provide at least 25-30 cm of tunnel-holding substrate in a shaded, slightly moist nest zone. Wild females excavate laying tunnels that can approach 23 cm. Offer gradients of moisture and depth rather than forcing a gravid female into a single small nest box.

Adult diet

Base the diet on varied gut-loaded invertebrates: beetles where safely available, locusts, crickets, roaches, grasshoppers, snails and other appropriate prey. Continental populations are mainly insectivorous; fruit is a seasonal supplement rather than a staple. Avoid routine vertebrate prey even though occasional vertebrates are taken in the wild.

Juvenile diet

Offer smaller well-fed insects frequently while growing, with regular calcium and appropriate UVB. Juveniles require accessible water, dense visual cover and a gentler heat gradient. Do not subject small or underweight juveniles to the full adult winter-cooling protocol.

Social management

Adult males are strongly territorial. Do not keep multiple males together. Even a male-female pairing requires a large, complex enclosure with multiple basking and hiding sites and immediate separation capacity if either animal is chased, bitten or excluded from heat, food or retreats.

Daily keeper checks

Check alertness, gait, toes and claws, eyes and nose, mouth, tail, skin, feces, hydration and body mass. During spring breeding monitor female condition, abdominal contour, digging and calcium intake. During brumation use periodic visual and weight checks without repeatedly warming the animal.

Lighting sequence

Use bright full-spectrum visible light with the UVB and basking zone; this is a highly heliothermic diurnal lacertid. Start spring lighting and heat gradually, reach peak duration through late spring and summer, then taper steadily in autumn. During deep winter rest, basking heat and UVB are switched off.

Breeding, Eggs and Evidence Notes

This species has unusually useful field and captive data, but geographic origin still changes seasonal timing.

Breeding timing

Across much of the range, courtship and mating occur during April-June. Gestation and laying follow in the first half of summer, commonly from late June through July and sometimes into the first half of August. Hatchlings often appear from the second half of September into early October. Atlantic and cool upland populations may run later; warm Mediterranean populations may run earlier.

Clutch size

Clutch size rises strongly with female size. Smaller adult females may lay about 5-12 eggs, while large females can exceed 20; captive series commonly report roughly 5-24 eggs. Most populations produce one clutch annually, although occasional second clutches have been reported. Do not condition females for maximum egg number at the expense of body condition.

Incubation

Published field summaries give approximately 70-95 days incubation. Long-term captive work reports successful incubation around 28 C, commonly within a 27-31 C range, with many clutches hatching in roughly 80-95 days. A practical starting point is 27.5-28.5 C in slightly moist vermiculite or perlite, with no free water touching the eggs.

Juvenile management

House hatchlings away from adults and monitor feeding individually. Provide dense cover, shallow water, a smaller but clear basking gradient and accessible UVB. Growth, body condition and feeding response should determine how quickly juveniles move toward adult temperatures and seasonal cooling.

Why the winter rest matters

True winter hibernation is documented in mainland France, including below-ground communal use and movement within the refuge. Long-term captive breeding accounts also switch basking off from mid-December until early March. A genuine cool season is therefore defensible for healthy breeding adults, but the exact depth and duration should match geographic origin and condition.

Evidence confidence

Current taxonomy and European range - High
Reptile Database; Iberian and French distribution syntheses.

Preferred active body temperature about 35.3 C - High
Direct thermal-gradient measurement in Timon lepidus.

Winter hibernation / subterranean refuges - High
Field observations in mainland France; lizard-depth winter temperatures documented.

Diet dominated by invertebrates - High
Multiple Iberian studies; Oleron fecal study found >60% insects plus molluscs and seasonal fruit.

Spring mating; summer laying; autumn hatch - High
Long-running Iberian reproductive syntheses across multiple populations.

Clutch commonly 5-20+ eggs - High-moderate
Strong female-size effect; field and long-term captive accounts agree on a broad range.

Incubation 27.5-28.5 C starting point - Moderate
Captive breeding experience supports ~28 C; natural incubation period 70-95 days.

Peak UVI 3-5 / basking surface 40-45 C - Moderate
Captive translation from measured preferred body temperature and heliothermic ecology; not direct field UVI data.

Key references

Reptile Database; Fei et al. 2012; Deso & Crouzet 2022; Mateo / Vertebrados Ibericos; Thirion, Grillet & Cheylan 2009; Arets 2003.

UVI beneath the optional T5 tube

Timon lepidus

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	2-3
April	3-4
May	4-5
June	4-5
July	4-5
August	4-5
September	3-4
October	2-3
November	1-2
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.