

BOOK REVIEWS

🌟🌟🌟🌟 = Highly Recommended 🌟🌟🌟 = Worth Purchasing 🌟🌟 = Questionable Value 🌟 = NOT Recommended



Iguana Iguana: A Guide for Successful Captive Care

Fredric L. Frye. 1995. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Florida. 178 pp. + 24 plates, Hardcover, US \$39.50. ISBN 0-89464-892-6.

Reviewed by Breck Bartholomew, 195 West 200 North, Logan, UT 84321

This book is based on the book *Iguanas: A Guide to Their Biology and Captive Care*, but don't let this fact fool you. When I read the first book I disagreed with much of the information and the approach to Iguana keeping. I told several people that they were better off buying *The Green Iguana Manual* by de Vosjoli than *Iguanas*. Some of the reviews of this first book were also critical to say the least. Thus it was with some apprehension that I began reading the book *Iguana iguana*. Fortunately, improvements were noticed readily and my apprehension dissipated quickly.

In revising the book, Frye has paid close attention to the criticisms of the previous work and it shows. The approach to iguana keeping is less "cuddly" and more responsible. Veterinary aspects play a greater role in the revised work.

The first chapter, "understanding green iguanas," offers some basic information about iguanas in general, before focusing on the green iguana. The section on selecting a green iguana offers good insights to help identify healthy animals as well as suggesting medical examinations for all newly acquired iguanas. The chapter goes on to describe many common behaviors, some of which have needlessly caused alarm to the new iguana owner. Another important aspect of this chapter are the sections on handling, restraint, and carrying. These sections will certainly help save many iguana toes and help reduce stress among both iguanas and owners.

Chapter 2 delves more deeply into husbandry techniques with an emphasis on proper caging. In addition to the size and type of cage, Frye discusses ways to reduce stress when multiple iguanas are housed near each other. Light, heat, water, and temperature are discussed as well as waste management, substrates, and furniture. The third chapter describes the digestive system and how it works, then builds on this knowledge to discuss feeding and nutrition. A diet is recommended that is consistent with our knowledge of wild iguanas and the problem of feeding animal protein is discussed. Frye emphasizes a well rounded diet of vegetables and includes a discussion about commercial iguana diets. Most commercial iguana diets were found to be inadequate; thus I found it odd that Appendix C lists 10 sources for commercial diets. Specific plants are discussed and nutritional values of several plants are presented in tabular form. Plants that might be toxic to iguanas are presented in Chapter 4.

The next five chapters make up the heart of this book. They discuss medical disorders and treatments of green

iguanas. All of the common, and many of the uncommon, medical disorders found in green iguanas are presented in a way that will be beneficial to many iguana owners. Although, some of the topics require specific jargon that may require some veterinary knowledge, most of the text will prove understandable to the average reader. Frye discusses symptoms, separated for quick reference, then suggests treatments. This is not, however, a do-it-yourself manual. Among the many important aspects of these chapters, two stand out in my mind. First, these chapters enable iguana owners to identify when their lizard is sick or unhealthy and give them an idea of what is wrong. Secondly, veterinarians will be able to refer to these chapters to help diagnose and treat the lizard more effectively.



"It's Alive!" Iguana Owner's Manual: Iguana Understanding, Care and Service.

Henry Lizardlover. Prymal House Publishing, 10700 Santa Monica Blvd, Suite 4-378, Santa Monica, CA 90025. Reviewed by Deina Boismier.

It looks as if this book were thrown together at Kinko's Copies—if I had known that this is supposed to be the "book" I would have never sent \$28 for it. Along with that fact and that the ad in Reptiles Magazine says it will be shipped in 5-10 days UPS, when I received mine a month later in regular mail, I'm severely disappointed.

It looks like a cheap booklet. I've seen better material published for SCA events, with a much cheaper price tag. The information seems to be thrown in randomly—one minute you're reading about Character, the next Nutrition, then Behavior (wouldn't that fit better under Character?). As far as the information goes, most of the info he includes seems to be common knowledge, or found in other books. He's very repetitive (which he does warn about in the introduction), but I think if he stopped repeating the same thing over and over, there really wouldn't be much bulk to this "book". The photos (or photocopies of photos) are annoying and they, too, are repetitive. I felt that the clippings of his newspaper articles were unnecessary.

One paragraph in the book annoyed me to no end. Under "Character" (page 11)—he says (in my own words) that if you have a problem iguana and haven't been able to "train" it over months and months, you have his "permission" to sell it to a pet store, or let someone else try their hand. That's stupid! That's just passing the buck—pet owners have responsibilities, and you can't be guaranteed a "perfect" animal. That statement is just as stupid as someone telling me that if I'm having problems with my daughter, and am unable to control her behavior, I have permission to put her up for adoption, or give her away to someone. There are enough pets, reptiles, dogs and cats dumped and left for dead because people don't want to deal with them and the problems they may encounter. Giving it away isn't

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the answer (unless the owners are jerks and decide to just outright neglect the animal, in which case, they should have never considered getting it to begin with).

Overall, I'm not impressed with the book. I could have found better things to do with my money.

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Your Easy Guide to Care, Training and Breeding of Common Green Iguana. Dolly Ellerbrock. 43 pp., 9 b&w illustrations, several b&w cartoons. Illustrations by Jo Jo Veltri. Photography by Kevin Ritchey. 1995. ABELexpress, Carnegie PA. Reviewed by Helen Benton.

I was attracted to this booklet by the cover, which features a beautiful, arrogant male iguana, flaunting his breeding colors and displaying a battle-scarred dewlap. This short booklet consists of 10 chapters, a Q & A section, a short list of source materials, and a glossary.

Unfortunately, my attraction was rapidly dispelled as I delved further into this book and discovered a significant amount of misinformation and numerous technical errors in the form of misspelled words and poor phrasing.

Contrary to the author's statement early in the book, common green iguanas do not make wonderful pets for people of all ages! Unless you are willing to work closely with a competent reptile veterinarian, please do not purchase one.

The first chapter, on caging, was informative but long. I wonder about the author's priorities. So much space (over 20%) given to the building of the cage, but diet and medical problems resulting from poor diet were barely mentioned. She mentions metabolic bone disease (MBD) but notes only that it is caused by "improper diet." She does not address the issue of the required 2:1 calcium/phosphorous ratio in the diet, nor does she share with her readers adequate information regarding the prevention and treatment of MBD. This is a major medical problem suffered by iguanas in captivity and is due primarily to the low calcium level in the blood [resulting from insufficient full-spectrum UV-light]. This should have been given a much higher profile in the book than it was. It should also have been explicitly stated that no animal protein should be given to iguanas.

I have frequent blood profiles done on my iguanas, as this is [one] way to determine their nutritional status. In addition, all of my iguanas have frequent check-ups consisting of fecals, cultures and sensitivities, and CBC, as well as the blood profiles.

The author mentions Salmonella but does not adequately address the issue of health concerns caused by zoonoses (diseases transmitted from animal to man). Never clean reptile cages or equipment in food preparation areas, such as the kitchen sink or counter.

I was amused with the chapter on training but decided to try her methods when my "alpha" male, Fred, was engaged in some very forceful and potentially injurious

breeding activity (jaws clamped tightly on flesh) with one of his wives. I informed him that he was a bad boy, and used some of the author's suggested phrases and words like "stop," "no hurt," "no bite," and "release," hoping that her ideas would work. When it became apparent that Fred and I had a communication problem, I used my tactic—a bowl scraper to pry his jaws open, heavy gloves for me (even a very gentle male will become very annoyed at being separated from the object of his attention), and for his battered wife an isolation tank, Betadine and New-Skin.

At the end of the book, the author quotes Fredric L. Frye, DVM, as being very helpful with information, but she not only misspells his name when she lists her sources, she also fails to credit him with his two very informative books on iguanas.

For a book only 43 pages in length (with lots of white space on each page), there are far too many typographical, spelling, and usage errors. Examples: p. 7: "Note: using screws instead of nails are recommended." P. 14: "Placing your locks 1 high and 1 low will prevent accidental opening and escapes." P. 19 and p. 42: "Blood-stop or septic pencil...; Veterinary blood clotting gel, powder or septic pencil." P. 36: "Hatching are usually twenty centimeters long." P. 42: "...controlled by a reastat or thermostat." In at least one place, the information given is inconsistent with another part of the booklet. On p. 37, for example, we are told that "Iguanas snort—they do not sneeze." In the 17-term glossary, however, "Snorting = Sneezing."

The author's use of the term "UVD Light" (whatever that is) is a mystery. The glossary defines UVD Light as "(Sunlight) Ultraviolet vitamin D₃ synthesis. To help with digestion." UVB Light is defined as "Ultraviolet black light. To help with the photo chemical of the vitamin D₃ synthesis." The discussions of this matter in the text (pp. 16-17) are of no help; the description of the heat/light sources are so confusing that no sense whatever can be made of them. This can have serious consequences for the novice iguana keeper, as proper light and heat are critical for an iguana's well being.

I applauded the author's love and dedication to the iguana, but before she attempts another book, she should research her subject—and have it reviewed and proofread (these two are different) by qualified individuals. Books such as this only mislead and confuse the novice iguana owner and may result in some otherwise avoidable medical problems for the iguana. The market has become flooded with hatchling iguanas, and they are priced low enough to be labeled disposable pets. Literature regarding the care of these lizards should be accurate, comprehensive, and documented; this booklet fails to meet those standards.

I would like to thank my friends and veterinarians for their opinions and views about this book: Fredric L. Frye, DVM; Donald L. Burton, DVM; Todd R. Swanson, DVM; Ann Crafton, DVM; and Martin J. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

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