

FRILLIES

(Frilled-neck Lizards)



These big lizards are not a beginner lizard, however, if you have the knowledge and experience, they are a dynamic pet full of personality. Either zipping around their enclosure all day, or sleeping on the same branch for days, you'll never quite know what they're thinking – and that's the fun part! If you have room in your life (and your home) for a supersized lizard, a frilly is the pet for you. There's lots of love to be had for these iconic Aussie lizards.

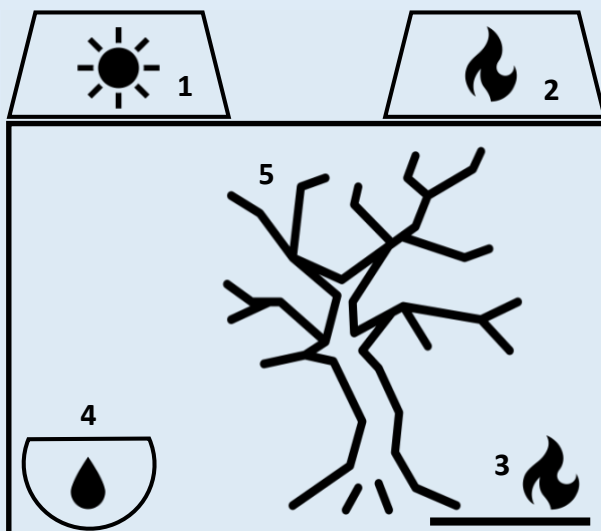
Housing

Enclosure Size: Enclosure size will depend on the number of frillies you intend to house; if frillies are a new species to you, consider keeping a single individual while you learn their unique needs. More experienced keepers will be able to house them in pairs if desired but should avoid keeping males together to reduce the risk of aggression, and males should not be housed with a female as they can become quite dominant/intense during mating season.

A single frilly should have enough room to run, climb and maintain a solid thermal gradient (cool end, warm end). Frillies are good climbers but will come to the ground to eat, sleep, or regulate temperature. These reptiles require a big size commitment from their keepers, and this should be kept in mind when considering a frilled neck as a pet. A suitable enclosure size for a single juvenile dragon would be 120cmLx60cmDx60cmH, or 120cmLx60cmDx120cmH for a pair. Enclosure size should be grown with your frilly to not overwhelm them initially with an oversized environment.

Enclosure materials should also be considered as they offer different traits.

- Glass: waterproof but offers no insulation against heat loss.
- MDF: keeps heat well but is not watertight.
- Custom enclosures: can be tailored to your needs but can be expensive.



Enclosure Setup Example:

1. UV globe
2. Heat lamp
3. Heat mat or cord
4. Water bowl
5. Branch/logs
6. Automatic Mister (optional)

Temperature: Frillies come from hot, temperate regions of Australia so they love basking in intense heat. Enclosures should have both a “cool end” and a “warm end” that allows your frilly to choose the temperature it would like to be. Your frilly should enjoy a basking spot of 38-42C° and a “cool end” between 25-27C°.

Lighting/Heating: There are a few different ways to light and heat your enclosure, but we have found the most successful way is:

- Top heat via a reflector globe that is set on a timer. (10-12 hours)
- A separate UV light (we recommend Arcadia Pro T5 UVB 14%) set on a timer (10-12 hours)
- Overnight heat (as a juvenile) using either a heat mat or heat cords.

The wattage of your lights/heating will depend on the size of your enclosure and should be controlled with a thermometer/thermostat to ensure the correct temperatures are being maintained.

Substrate: There are several great substrates that can be used for frillies.

- Paper towel: easy to clean & replace.
- Fake grass: easy to clean but can smell after time if not cleaned properly.
- Reptile safe sand: easy to clean but may be ingested.

It is important you monitor your frillies behaviour on the ground as they can eat substrates when their calcium/mineral levels are deficient.

Accessories: Keeping your frillies’ enclosure simple to begin with is recommended while you get used to each other. A simple beginner enclosure will include:

- A large, deep-water bowl or flowing water feature
- Solid branches/logs to climb and bask on (both upright and angled)
- Rock/s to bask on
- Fake plant/s to hide in or a rock hide.
- Automatic misting machine.

Handling

Frillies are known for having big personalities to match their big stature, so forming a good relationship with handling while young is ideal. Each frilly will have a varying personality, so it’s important to work with their specific needs. Frillies have been known to develop a “sulking” behaviour when in a captive environment. Enrichment in the form of handling, feeding or other activities can help this. It is not unusual for frillies to have moods; learning about your frillies personality (as well as good note taking) can be helpful to distinguish any change in behaviour that lasts longer than a few days (which can be a possible health concern).

Handling can be done daily, and it is advised to approach your frilly from below, as grabbing them from above may startle or frighten them. Observe their posture before you approach, as you may experience an unexpected tail whip. Handling can be slowly introduced to avoid overwhelming them, with sessions kept gentle and calm, guided by your pet and their reactions. Frillies are quite fast, with sharp claws

and it's advisable to cover bare skin to avoid accidental scratches while your confidence grows with handling. Pets such as dogs and cats should be out of the room while you are handling your reptile, and supervision is always recommended for young children.

See troubleshooting below for common handling problems

Feeding

Food: Frillies are omnivores and will eat a variety of bugs, vegetables, and meat. It is important to feed your frilly different foods to ensure they're receiving the correct levels of calcium, phosphorus, vitamins, and protein. Fruit should be given sparingly as it contains a lot of hard to digest sugars.

As a juvenile, we recommend feeding smaller quantities of food more often, which can then be modified as your frilly grows. An example would be:

- 1-3 months: Feeding small amounts twice a day.
- 3-6 months: Feeding once a day.
- 6-12 months: Feeding every 2nd day.
- 12+ months: Feeding 3 times a week and backed off in the cooler months.

Water: It is recommended that your frilly has access to a big water source (a large and deep-water bowl or preferably a running waterfall) as these guys are known to engage in "water play", bathing & pooping in water. Regular misting will encourage them to drink, as well as assist in humidity levels and shedding; this can be done manually with a spray bottle, or by using an automated misting system within the enclosure. Misting can be done daily as a juvenile and backed off to a few times a week as an adult. Water bowls can be placed in the "cool end" of the enclosure and can be cleaned weekly and monitored for water loss throughout the week.

Supplements: Calcium powder helps with the development of your frillies' bones and can be given with every few feeds (dusted on insects). This can also reduce the likelihood of your pet eating its substrate, which has been seen in frillies with low calcium levels. A small bowl of calcium can be left available in your frillies' enclosure, as they will usually help themselves when they need to. Appropriate levels of nutrients can help reduce risk of MDB later in the life of your frilly.

See Discover Deadly's "Lizard Feeding Guide" for information on lizard safe foods

Troubleshooting

My frilly isn't eating!

If your frilly is new, they may need a few days to settle into their environment – this can be quite a stressful time for them (and you). A few contributing factors to new or adult frillies not eating include:

- Temperature – is your enclosure at the correct heat for the species?
- Excess and/or stressful handling sessions
- Food – your frilly may want a change of diet.

- Torpor – frillies may go into a state of inactivity for a few hours up to a few weeks at a time.
- Any changes in the household – visitors etc.
- Where enclosure is located in the home – near drafts, direct sunlight etc.
- Breeding season

My frilly didn't slough (shed) properly!

A juvenile frilly should be shedding regularly as they grow and gain weight fast; a healthy adult may only shed a few times a year. Frillies do not tend to shed in one solid piece; rather lots of smaller pieces that fall off while your pet runs around in its enclosure. Frills, ears, mouths and toes can be inspected during shedding to help remove any build up. Ensure that your husbandry is correct (heating, humidity, access to water etc.) as this can all affect your frillies ability to shed correctly. Regular misting will help keep humidity levels up and allow for an easier shedding experience. If all other attempts have not worked, seek professional advice. Do not attempt to remove large pieces of skin yourself as this can cause damage to scales and lead to further issues.

See below references for vet recommendations

It's winter and my frilly is acting different!

Your new dragon may go into a state of torpor during the cooler months. This is an involuntary behaviour that some reptiles have adapted to survive when temperatures are too low for metabolic activity (usually a body temperature below 32°). As a juvenile, we recommend using heat 24 hours a day for the first few years of its life as this can help reduce the likelihood of your frilly entering torpor. Keep an eye on your thermometer temperatures during the cooler months, especially at night. Food and water can still be offered to your pet as this is not a prolonged state and will last from a few hours up to a few weeks depending on conditions.

Bites!

Your new frilly may try to bite you during handling sessions; know that as a juvenile this is not likely to hurt and is expected to happen at least once or twice during the life of your pet, however adults have sizeable front teeth and although rare, bites can be painful. There are a few possible reasons why a frilly may bite:

- Feeding– this is usually the result of the handler placing their fingers near their pet while eating or using their fingers to feed instead of tongs.
- Accidental – some animals will instinctively open their mouths when there is something pressing on their jaw.
- Defence – frillies don't like to be approached from above as it can startle them or make them think an overhead predator is nearby.
- Incorrect handling – Support your frilly from underneath using a flat, open palm. Your thumb can be used gently to apply pressure on their back to stop excess wiggling and/or jumping.

All things frilly poop!

As mentioned above, your frilly could try to ingest their enclosure substrate. There can be a few reasons for this, from accidental while eating to self-medicating, so

keepers should keep an eye out for this behaviour. Faeces can be monitored not only for traces of substrate, but also to ensure food is being fully digested. Frillies may be prone to prolapse more than other dragon species, and hard, poorly digested faeces or substrate can lead to them over exerting and experiencing a prolapse event. If impaction or prolapse are suspected, contact your vet immediately as these events can be life threatening if left untreated.

I've lost my frilly!

Always check your enclosure is closed correctly, and never leave your frilly outside of its enclosure unsupervised. Frillies can move quite fast, so try to locate them as soon as possible. If you do lose your new pet, there are steps you can take:

- If possible, restrict frilly to the room it was lost in (i.e., if lost in the loungeroom, close all windows, seal doors by wedging a towel underneath, close vents etc.)
- Frillies are more likely to find somewhere to climb up onto as they run (curtains, a window ledge, couch etc.)
- Look on places that emit heat like the top of fridges, dishwashers, behind TVs, windowsills.
- If the animal cannot be located, contact the DBCA (Department of Biodiversity & Attractions) as soon as possible and follow their instructions.

Book a One-on-One Session

With over 40 years combined experience in the herpetology industry, the Discover Deadly team share a range on expertise. Consultant sessions are available for general advice or more specific issues. Bookings can be made online for \$30 up to 15 minutes.

Resources

Your first point of contact for advice/enquiries should always be your original breeder however, there are several professional businesses that can be reached out to.

- Unusual Pet Vets (Murdoch) 08 6117 7440
- Unusual Pet Vets (Osbourne Park) 08 6117 7450
- Busselton Vet Hospital 08 9752 1433
- Discover Deadly 08 9755 1771
- Southwest Pets (Bunbury) 08 9721 6217
- DBCA 08 9442 0300

Further Reading:

- "Keeping & Breeding Australian Lizards" by Mike Swan
- "Australian Lizards: A Natural History" by Steve K Wilson
- "A Guide to Australian Dragons in Captivity" by Dr Danny Brown

This care sheet© has been produced as a general guide for Western Australian reptile keepers. It should not replace the advice of a veterinarian.

Discover Deadly takes no responsibility in the misuse of the information provided.

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