

# Chinese Water Dragon

*Physignathus cocincinus*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Found in tropical rain forests, usually close to a water source. Water dragons are arboreal and need lots of space. They are capable of changing shades of colors between green and brown, depending on the temperature.



### Is a water dragon the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I have a lot of space to house a water dragon.
- I can commit to providing a complex diet for my water dragon.
- I want a pet that doesn't require obedience or house training.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this lizard.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered "Yes" to these statements, a water dragon may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a water dragon and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

**Average Size** 2 to 3 feet

**Life Span** Up to 15 years with proper care

**Diet** Provide a variety of insects, including mealworms, waxworms, and earthworms; frozen, thawed pinkie mice, and small feeder fish; Approximately 10 to 15% of diet should include dark and leafy greens (mustard, collard, radish, kale) and fruits (grape, apple, orange, pear)

**Feeding** Feed juveniles daily; feed adults every 2 to 3 days; remove uneaten food to prevent spoilage; provide a multiple vitamin/mineral supplement once or twice a week and calcium daily

**Housing** Due to the varied sizes and growth rates of reptiles, and their individualized needs, we recommend you consult your qualified reptile veterinarian and a book on this species to determine it's specific housing requirements

Size – Appropriate size and shape habitat to accommodate normal behaviors and exercise

Habitat – Provide multiple hiding areas to avoid nose rub; branches for basking; an incandescent light with access to a cooler area; mist daily to maintain humidity of 60 to 80%

Substrate – Use pelleted or mulch type; lizards may eat their substrate, if they do, switch to something they cannot eat, like paper or cage carpet, or an edible substrate

Temperature – Temperature gradient (100° F. for the warm end and 70° F. for the cool end); recommend radiant heat; use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source

Lighting – Provide needed UVB rays with full spectrum fluorescent light for 10 to 12 hours a day; incandescent bulb is needed for basking area if not using a ceramic heater

Water – May not drink directly from a bowl and rely on moisture on non-toxic plants and in collecting pools in the tank; also provide large deep bowl of fresh, chlorine-free water for drinking or bathing (for semi-aquatic tropical lizards)

Males should be housed separately; do not house different species of reptiles together

### Recommended Supplies

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat with secure lid  | <input type="checkbox"/> Humidity gauge                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Misting bottle                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Undertank heater         | <input type="checkbox"/> Incandescent light or ceramic heater | <input type="checkbox"/> Limbs or cork bark for climbing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basking rock or log      | <input type="checkbox"/> Vitamin/mineral supplement           | <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large water bowl         | <input type="checkbox"/> Full spectrum fluorescent light      | <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about water dragons | <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial or live non-toxic plants  |  |

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**Normal Behavior and Interaction** Babies and juveniles can become used to human interaction; as adults, some may become hard to handle and may bite  
Easily frightened or startled; avoid loud noises and quick movements around them  
Keep males separately

**Habitat Maintenance** Change water daily  
Thoroughly clean the tank at least once week: set water dragon aside in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all smell of bleach; dry the tank and furnishings; and add clean substrate

**Grooming and Hygiene** Regularly shed their skin; ensure humidity of habitat allows for proper shedding; to facilitate shedding, bathe in a large container that allows lizard to immerse its entire body  
Always wash your hands before and after touching water dragon or habitat contents to help prevent *Salmonella* and other infectious diseases

- Signs of a Healthy Animal**
- Clear eyes
  - Body and tail are rounded, filled out
  - Healthy skin
  - Clear nose and vent
  - Eats regularly
  - Active and alert

**Common Health Issues**

Health Issue (alpha)	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Gastro-intestinal Disease	Runny stools, caked or smeared stool around the vent area, and loss of appetite caused by bacterial or parasitic infection.	Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
Metabolic Bone/Vitamin Deficiency	Inability to absorb calcium due to insufficient UVB light. If untreated, can lead to a disorder characterized by deformities and softened bones. Swollen limbs and lethargy.	Provide ample UVB lighting and consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
Nose Rub	Red or swollen snout caused by water dragon running into tank wall repeatedly.	Changes to habitat must be made. Consult your exotic animal veterinarian.
Respiratory Disease	Labored breathing, runny nose, swollen eyes. Can be caused by temperatures that are too cold.	Ensure proper lighting, water, and basking conditions. If condition persists, consult your veterinarian.

- Red Flags**
- Weight loss or decreased appetite
  - Swelling
  - Bumps, sores, or abrasions on skin
  - Paralysis of limbs or tail
  - Mucus in mouth or nose
  - Lethargy
  - Labored breathing
  - Abnormal feces

**If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.**

**Sources** *Anoles, Basilisks, and Water Dragons* by R.D. and Patricia Bartlett  
*The General Care and Maintenance of Green Water Dragons, Sailfin Lizards, and Basilisks* by Phillippe De Vosjoli

**Note:** The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.