



Steppe Runner *Eremias arguta*

- Steppe Runners are small, terrestrial diurnal lizards belonging to the southwestern European group of wall lizards known as the Lacertids. They occupy the arid to semi-arid desert, steppe, and scrubland areas of this region.
- A primarily terrestrial lizard with a ground or base color of tan, light brown, to grayish brown with several rows of light colored dorsal spots and ocelli bordered in black.
- If provided the proper care, steppe runners can probably attain longevity of at least 8-10 years or more (although their captive longevity is not yet fully known).

Size

Steppe runners typically reach 5-8" as adults.

Housing

Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling steppe runners can be housed in a 10 gallon terrarium or enclosure. They are active, diurnal lizards that require a minimum of a 20-30 gallon long terrarium or enclosure as adults. Multiple animals that are housed together must have accordingly larger accommodations (although males should not be housed together). Steppe runners of all ages can be maintained on low humidity substrates including play sand, reptile sand, or aspen bedding. For water, low humidity levels should be maintained, with a small, shallow waterbowl being provided. Steppe runners can also be misted occasionally for additional hydration. Provide artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, slabs, crevices, or logs for ample basking and hiding opportunities for them.

Steppe runners are frequent baskers, and thus a thermal gradient (or a warm side) in the cage/enclosure with an appropriate sized under tank heating pad, ceramic, or radiant heat emitter should be provided. Ideal temperatures for these lizards range from 78-80 degrees F on the cool side and around 95-100 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Steppe runners will require overhead UVB incandescent and/or florescent lighting to thrive.

Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2-3 months.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, steppe runners are primarily insectivores (eating insects and other invertebrates), although they will catch and consume other prey items as well such as smaller reptiles, and some fruit and vegetable matter if available.

In captivity, steppe runners can be fed a mostly insectivorous diet of many types of feeder insects (crickets, mealworms, waxworms, roaches, and superworms), as well as some fruits and vegetables, and even occasionally pre-killed rodents of appropriate size (but feed them these sparingly, if at all). As with many lizards, steppe runners can become quite accustomed to human interaction, and can often become hand fed or will accept food from a bowl or dish. Providing calcium and vitamin D3 supplements or supplementation (i.e. dusting) in steppe runner diets whenever possible is also important.

Handling

Steppe runners can be handled or restrained for short periods of time, but are not an overly hands on or handleable species, and can be subject to stress and/or possible injury if done so incorrectly. As with many smaller lizards, steppe runners may be active, and therefore care should be taken to avoid dropping or injuring them during handling.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****