

# THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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## The Editor's Den

The February Forked Tongue features an article on breeding *Uromastyx* lizards in captivity. It is a continuation of last month's *Uromastyx* article. Please send in articles. It's herp breeding season. Other individuals would love to hear what you're hoping for this year.

## Calendar of Events

April 4, 2007 – Monthly meeting featuring Jeff Davis Speaking on the Eastern Massasauga.

May 2, 2007 – Monthly Meeting featuring Marc Frevola Speaking on Using Herps for Learning in the Classroom.

July 11, 2007 (Note that this is not the first Wednesday!) – Monthly Meeting featuring Will Bird and Phil Peak speaking on Snake conservation in Kentucky.

August 1, 2007 – Monthly Meeting featuring Dan Meakin, DVM, speaking on snake anatomy.

## Uromastyx

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[http://www.deerfernfarms.com/Uromastyx\\_Care.htm](http://www.deerfernfarms.com/Uromastyx_Care.htm) copyright

**Breeding:** Most breeders believe *Uromastyx* need to be put through some form of winter in order to sufficiently cycle to induce breeding and fertile egg production. The various species vary over how "severe" a winter they need, with Moroccans, Mali's, and Egyptians needing the coldest/longest winters, Ornates, Saharans and benti needing moderate/mild winters, and Sudanese needing the bare minimum of seasonal differences to successfully cycle. We've tried numerous approaches to wintering or "brumating" our *Uromastyx*, with widely variable results. Too warm or too short a "winter" and most species won't cycle, too cold or too long and mortality becomes a problem.

The best solution for us has been as follows:

First, stop feeding Mali's, Moroccans, and Egyptians about 2 weeks prior to the start of your "winter". Cut severely back on the amounts but continue to feed Ornates, both benti species, Saharans and Sudanese *Uromastyx*. We mostly offer Romaine and endive at this time primarily for their high water content. Avoid

peas, beans, and any high protein foods. At the same time cut your day length to 10 hours of light but leave the cage temperatures close to normal during the day, while trying to keep no hotter than 70F at night. After the first week, we drop day length down to 8 hours per day. All else stays the same. At the end of week 2, we drop day length to 6 hours per day, and try to maintain the cage temperatures around 60F to 65F for at least 20 hours per day. Then for at least 4 hours per day, we turn on the basking lights so that the cage temperature hits at least 80's F, preferably 85F, for at least 2 full hours. The goal here is to stimulate the immune system to kick in and gut function to reactivate for at least 2 hours each day. Failure to do this will significantly increase your mortality rate, especially for Ornates, Sudanese, and the benti. If you haven't cleared the guts of your Mali's and Moroccans, they too risk suffering from gut paralysis and eventual necrosis. During this time we still offer limited food to the benti and Saharans but generally restrict food for everyone else. Note we still have bird seed in the cage as bedding, so some feeding might be occurring, but except for the benti and Saharans, most *Uromastyx* will not seek food at this time. We continue this to produce a "winter" of approx. 6 to 8 weeks. We then bump the cage day temp to the mid 80'sF and day length to 8 hours per day for a week. The next week we go to normal daytime cage temps and 10 hours day length, the third week 12 hours, the fourth week 14 hours. During this "spring" time, we try to keep our night temps near 70F. Most our Uro's will be up and basking by the end of "spring" week one and eating lightly by week two. By the third week most should be back to their normal activity levels. This system has worked well for us for several years running now and several other breeders use a very similar system with excellent success as well.

For egg laying, we use 3.3 gal. or 10 gal. Rubbermaid "Roughneck" soft plastic tubs, lids intact. We cut a 3" round hole in the upper corner of the long side of the tub, and insert a 2' to 3' section of 3" diameter drainage pipe (flexible, ribbed plastic, see photo above). We then cut a hole in the side of the pipe so that the Uro's have easy access out of the pipe and into the nest chamber. The insides of the nest boxes are half filled

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with a 50:50 mix of playground-grade sand and SuperSoil brand potting soil moistened just enough to allow it to hold a tunnel. We've taken to adding a handful of lime to the mix as well to lower the overall acidity of the soil. Our long-term established wild-collected animals and captive-breds use this setup without hesitation. Most of the newly imported Mali's have balked and buried their eggs in the bird seed, often under the basking spot. It appears that the nest boxes are best put in w/ the females PRIOR to the onset of the breeding season so that they can become accustomed to moving in and out of them and digging preliminary tunnels. **As a side note, be sure to trim the toenails of your gravid females a few weeks before they lay. They are notorious for nicking their eggs while burying them.**

We remove the eggs as soon as they are detected and place them on their sides in specially designed egg-holding cartons. These cartons are then placed in our incubator at 93F.

Uromastyx eggs relay their fertility and viability status very clearly. Fertile eggs have a distinct red circle (the developing embryo) clearly visible at the time the eggs are laid. We orient our eggs so as to position the embryo along the side of the egg, but it's highly unlikely that this is necessary. Fresh eggs are somewhat water-balloon-like when laid, but good eggs usually firm up and whiten within a day or two at most. Eggs which are distinctly yellow or in which you can see the contents moving around inside in a two-toned pattern (milky yellow in a clearer yellow) are already in the early stages of disintegration and will not hatch. Dud eggs will begin to smell almost immediately and are often easy to detect in the incubator within 3 to 4 days. Duds also often keep a faintly oily look to them and rarely firm up. In the past, we've incubated at temperatures ranging from 85F to 88F with so so success. This results in hatchlings in about 80 to 100 days. Initial thoughts from various other reptiles breeders suggested that we were incubating too high. However, field data for Ornate Uromastyx now suggests we've actually been incubating too low. Several of us thus tried 92F to 94F several seasons ago with excellent results. Thus while you may still see others list the lower temperatures as correct, we've decided to permanently change our temperatures to 93F  $\pm$ 2F.

At 93F, incubation for most Uromastyx species should range closer to 55 to 65 days. The hatchlings are quite vigorous and ready to feed within a day or two. Treat them as you would adults, but slightly cooler and periodically offer water. Watch for signs of

aggression. Dominant animals will significantly repress the growth of the other hatchlings housed with them. Siblings usually get along with each other (with one individual per clutch almost always being an exception). However intermixing already established clutches almost always leads to fighting. Sudanese and the benti Uromastyx **must** have drinking water available as described earlier until the first or second shed have been past. The other species do well with or without this extra water, as long as they keep their bellies full. Note hatchlings **MUST** be offered fresh fecal pellets from a healthy adult Uromastyx during the first few days post hatching. They need this in order to properly inoculate their guts and grow normally. Failure to do this will often significantly stunt their growth and increase their potential to suffer gut impactions early in life. The drive for them to eat this material wanes quickly, so you must do this as soon as possible. Crumble fresh fecal pellets into their normal food and watch to make sure each individual eats at least some of the fecal mass. Don't use a fecal pellet from an adult whom you've recently wormed or treated with antibiotics. Pick an individual that is obviously thriving and is free from an excessive load of parasites (not a lot of "rice"-like particles in the fecal pellet), but it doesn't have to be parasite-free. Parasite-free may not even be desirable - they jury is still out on that one. By parasites, we're strictly referring to nematodes. Other parasites such as coccidia etc. are undesirable at any levels.

Try not to offer hatchlings any dry foods for the first month or two. They easily get gut impactions from overly dry food lodging in the intestines. If you feel a hard mass in their bellies, try to induce drinking and later GENTLY massaging the mass to try to break it up. A warm water enema may prove necessary to hydrate the mass from both sides to free it up and allow passage. If you feed only moist foods and occasionally mist their foods, impactions should not be a problem. Hatchlings are also much more prone to metabolic bone disease from insufficient vit. D3 and calcium/trace mineral imbalances in the diet (or from excessive insect consumption). Avoid the temptation to feed insects, you are not doing them a favor! Getting your hatchlings off to a good fast start significantly lowers the incidence of problems down the line, especially for impactions.

Hopefully this covers the basic's you'll need to successfully keep and potentially breed your Uromastyx. Enjoy!

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### Classified Advertising Policy

GCHS Members may run a free classified ad of 7 lines or less at no charge for an unlimited time; however, the ad will be canceled after one month unless the editor is informed to continue it. Please include scientific names for the animals with your ad as well as your phone number and area code. Ads of up to 7 lines for non-member are \$2 per issue; ad charges for items more than 7 lines long are as follows:

Business card size	\$3 per issue
1/4 page	\$6 per issue
2 page	\$10 per issue
Full page	\$20 per issue

**The GCHS is not liable for the quality of the merchandise advertised. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.**

### Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked Tongue

Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 47001.

Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at [gradycalhoun@earthlink.net](mailto:gradycalhoun@earthlink.net).

Black and white photographs can be included with articles. Photo submissions should include your name, phone number, and description of photo on the back. Photos can be returned.

All time dependent submissions must be in the editor's possession no later than the meeting previous to the publication.

### Classifieds

Rats and Mice for sale. Reasonable price. Call Jesse or Tom (513) 876-0579.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card-carrying members of the GCHS at *All Creatures Animal Hospital*. Dr. Dan Meakin, All Creatures, 1894 Ohio Pike, Amelia, OH 45102, 513-797-7387.

Discount: A 10% discount is offered to all card carrying members of the GCHS at Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic, 5989 Meijer Dr., Suite 2, Milford, Ohio 513-576-0131

(Number to left of decimal indicates males; number to right of decimal indicates females; number to right of second decimal indicates number of unknown sex. For example, 3.2.1=3 males, 2 females, and 1 unsexed specimen)

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### Currently Held Positions

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	
		(513) 564-6041	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452			(513) 564-6041
Sergeant-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452	Education Committee Chairman		
Advisor	Vacant		Peggy Fille		(513) 528-4452
Secretary	Kyle Becker	(513) 831-4898			

### About the GCHS

The Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society holds monthly meetings which typically consist of a short business section, a refreshment intermission, and a program related to herpetology. Both members and nonmembers are invited to attend. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in reptiles and amphibians. New members may sign up by mail or at the monthly meetings. Members receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue* and free classified advertising. Annual dues should be directed to the secretary at the society's mailing address, according to the rates below:

Student	\$10.00	Corresponding	
	\$10.00		
Individual	\$15.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$20.00	Institutional	\$30.00
Contributing	\$50.00		

### Why Be a Member?

Receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue*

§Meet individuals knowledgeable about herpetoculture

§Have access to captive-bred herps and feeder animals

§Participate in society-sponsored field trips, and outings.

§Receive a 10 percent discount on herp-related items and services when you show a valid membership card at the following establishments:

Delhi Pet Center (513) 451-4015

Kentucky Reptile Zoo (606) 663-9160

Harrison Pet Center (513) 367-1115

All Creatures Animal Hospital (513) 797-7387

Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic (513) 576-0131.

P.O. Box 14783  
Cincinnati, OH 45250

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