



*\*Dan Thomas/Animal House Pets & Supplies*

## Jeweled Lacerta *(Timon lepidus)*

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### **Animated Jewels from Europe**

Jeweled lacertas are a medium to large lacertid, or European wall lizard also known as the oscillated lizard, or oscillated lacerta. Their dorsal color ranges from bright green, to grayish, brown, or greenish brown with numerous dark rosettes on the back and vibrant blue ocelli along the sides in adult males. Black, or melanistic specimens are also occasionally seen. Jeweled lacertas are a sexually dimorphic species, with females and juveniles typically being less vibrant and colorful than adult males. These colorful and vibrant lizards have a wide distribution over much of southwestern to southern Europe. More specifically, this species occurs throughout the Iberian Peninsula from Spain through Portugal, and patchily distributed across southern France and northwestern Italy.

Jeweled lacertas are a primarily terrestrial species, but may climb on occasion as well if provided the opportunity. They can also dig and burrow well, and may also dig their own burrows or use those made by other animals. Jeweled lacertas are a beautiful and attractive addition to nearly anyone's collection, and can make for excellent pets.

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Reptilia

**Order:** Squamata

**Infraorder:** Scincomorpha

**Suborder:** Lacertilia

**Family:** Lacertidae

**Genus:** Timon

**Species:** *Timon lepidus*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, jeweled lacertas can attain longevity of 10 to 15 years or more.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The jeweled lacerta, or Oscillated lizard, is a medium sized, terrestrial lacertid lizard indigenous to a wide distribution over much of southwestern to southern Europe. More specifically, this

species occurs throughout the Iberian Peninsula from Spain through Portugal, and patchily distributed across southern France and northwestern Italy. Within this range, jeweled lacertas occupy primarily terrestrial to semi-arboreal environments, including Mediterranean shrubland, to rocky areas, shorelines, gardens, agricultural areas, and even urban and suburban areas, where they use burrows, rocks, logs, tree trunks, downed or low vegetation and other debris on or near the ground to thermoregulate, forage, and seek refuge.

### **Origin/History**

Timon lepidus (Daudin, 1802).

Unfortunately, there is insufficient information as to when exactly jeweled lacertas first entered the herpetocultural hobby, although they may have been since at least the 1990's or 2000's if a guess had to be undertaken.

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Jeweled lacertas are fairly small to mid-sized lizards, typically ranging from about 15.0 to 24.0 inches in total snout-to-tail length, or roughly 2 to 2 ½ feet as adults. Snout to vent length ranges from about 6.0 to 10.2 inches snout-to-vent length (SVL).

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Terrestrial to Semi-Arboreal.*** Housing must be sealed and escape proof. Hatchling and juvenile jeweled lacertas can be housed in a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium or enclosure. Adult jeweled lacertas are active lizards that require a minimum of a 40 gallon long terrarium or enclosure. Jeweled lacertas can be maintained on a substrate of play sand mixture, orchid bark, or ground walnut shell substrates. Provide a small dish of clean water, and change and clean it every several days, or sooner if fouled. Soaking them at least once weekly in lukewarm water for 15 to 20 minutes can also help raise their hydration. Provide ample basking and hiding opportunities by providing artificial foliage, driftwood, rocks, or logs. Jeweled lacertas can climb, but do not require a tall, or arboreal setup.

### **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Jeweled lacertas 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 lacertas range from 78 to 80 degrees F on the cool side and around 90 to 95 degrees F on the warm, basking side. Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of jeweled lacertas in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Also be sure to 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 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. Jeweled lacertas should be maintained at moderate relative humidity levels at, or within about 60 to 80%.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Primarily Insectivorous to Omnivorous;*** In the wild, jeweled lacertas are primarily insectivorous, and will eat insects and other invertebrates. They may also consume some fruit,

vegetable, and plant matter, as well as smaller vertebrates on occasion. Jeweled lacertas in captivity can be given a variety of feeder insects and other invertebrates of appropriate size, frequency, and proportion at least two to three times weekly. Feeder crickets, mealworms, waxworms, roaches, and other feeder insects, as well as some greens, fruits, and vegetable material such as dandelion greens and some commercially available omnivore and mixed fruit and vegetable diets can also be provided. They can also occasionally be given small pre-killed rodents of appropriate size, but sparingly. Providing calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation, as well as nutritional gutloading any feeder insects in these lizard's diets is essential for their health and well-being. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

Jeweled lacertas can often, at least initially, be a shy and skittish species, but can become quite docile and tolerant of handling once acclimated to their surroundings. Gentle and deliberate handling should take place with lacertas, as they can drop their tails when roughly handled or restrained too tightly.

**\*\*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\*\***

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

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