

Sheltopusik (*Pseudopus apodus*)

Difficulty: Hard

Sheltopusiks (*Pseudopus apodus*) are 4' / 1.2m long lizard with a triangular head, long body, plate-like scales, lateral groove, and most distinctively — no legs! Also known as the giant glass lizard or European legless lizard, these lizards are commonly mistaken for snakes. However, what distinguishes them from snakes are a set of distinctively un-snakelike traits, including eyelids, ear holes, and a tail that composes roughly 50% of their total length.

In terms of coloring, sheltopusiks are typically light tan to dark brown, although some have an orange or reddish hue. Some individuals may have a mottled or speckled pattern. The head is typically paler than the rest of the body, and the irises are also usually light-colored.

Sheltopusiks can be found from eastern Europe, through the Middle East, to western Asia, and have adapted to a variety of different habitats, from semi-arid climates in the west to more moist climates in the east. They are primarily active during the day.

Sheltopusiks can make very interesting, intelligent pets when cared for properly. If you pay careful attention to providing high-quality sheltopusik care, your pet may live for up to 50 years.

Shopping List

- 48" L x 24" W x 24" H (OR LARGER)
- 70w PAR38 halogen flood bulb, x2
- 5.5" dimmable dome lamp, x2
- 22" Zoo Med T5 HO Reptisun 10.0 OR Arcadia Desert 12% UVB bulb
- 24" Arcadia ProT5 or Vivarium Electronics T5 HO fixture
- 34" 6500K LED grow lamp
- Digital probe thermometer & hygrometer, x2
- Handheld pressure sprayer
- Power strip with programmable light timer
- Semi-arid substrate: (100lbs play sand + 2 cubic ft clean topsoil)
- Hides/caves, at least 2
- Environmental enrichment
 - magnetic ledges
 - hollow logs
 - cork flats
 - thick branches
 - leaf litter
 - artificial plants
 - sturdy live plants
- Food and water dishes
- Calcium and multivitamin supplement
- Soft-tipped feeding tongs

Housing

Sheltopusiks require an enclosure large enough to give them to let them fully stretch out, explore, hunt, and generally exercise natural behaviors. They are also terrestrial, which means that they are a ground-dwelling species, and generally prefer terrariums that are wider than they are tall.

This is why the minimum recommended enclosure size for a single sheltopusik is **48"L x 24"W x 24"H**. Whenever possible, larger is ideal.

Can multiple sheltopusiks be housed in the same enclosure?

This species does not appear to live in groups in the wild. Females may be able to get along in a large enough enclosure, but keep in mind that if they don't get along, they can fight and severely injure one another. Males in particular are known to fight. Altogether, it's best to house only one sheltopusik per enclosure.

Lighting & UVB

Sheltopusiks are diurnal, which means that they are primarily active during daytime. This means that they are likely to prefer warmer temperatures, are exposed to higher levels of UVB, and have poor night vision.

All lights should be turned off at night. You can use a 12/12 day/night cycle, or you can vary day length seasonally to encourage more natural hormonal rhythms. The easiest way to do this is to sync your pet's lights with your local sunrise and sunset times.

UVB Lighting

Sheltopusiks require UVB lighting for good long-term health. In order to get the right strength of UVB (measured by UV Index, or UVI), distance, equipment, and obstructions must be considered.

To provide appropriate UVB to a sheltopusik, you will need one Arcadia T5 HO 12% or Zoo Med T5 HO ReptiSun 10.0, roughly half the length of the enclosure, mounted in a reflective T5 HO fixture such as the Arcadia ProT5 or the Vivarium Electronics T5 HO fixture.

The basking platform should be placed as follows:

- UVB mounted over mesh: lizard's back is 12-15" / 30-38cm below UVB lamp when basking
- UVB mounted under mesh: lizard's back is 16-18" / 40-46cm below UVB lamp when basking

(These recommendations are approximations. It is strongly recommended to use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of 3.0-4.0 in the basking area.)

General Illumination

Diurnal reptiles are stimulated by the presence of bright daytime illumination in their environment, and a UVB bulb isn't bright enough to meet those needs. So you will need to supplement with a bright, 6500K T5 HO fluorescent or LED lamp (preferred), long enough to span most of the enclosure.

This is particularly important if you have live plants in the enclosure, but it is also valuable for providing additional illumination and supporting your dragon's general wellbeing. The Arcadia Jungle Dawn LED Bar and the Bio Dude Glow & Grow are my preferred choices.

Heating

Humans are *warm-blooded*, which means that our body temperature is automatically regulated. Sheltopusiks, however, are *cold-blooded*, which means that they have to move between areas of different temperatures to

regulate their body temperature. In the wild, sheltopusiks warm up by basking in a warm patch of sunlight. In captivity, the best way to replicate the warming effects of sunlight is with a heat lamp.

- **Basking area temperature: 90-95°F (32-35°C)**
- **Ambient temperature: 75-82°F (24-28°C)**
- **Nighttime temperature: 60-72°F (16-22°C)**

Generally speaking, a cluster of two ~70w halogen heat bulbs should be plenty for achieving the desired temperatures in your sheltopusik terrarium. Heat lamps should be placed on the extreme right or left of the setup to create a temperature gradient. Hardware store PAR38 halogen flood bulbs, the Arcadia Halogen Heat Lamp, and the Zoo Med Repti Tuff Splashproof Halogen Lamp all work well.

If you notice that the enclosure is getting too warm, dial down the heat with a lamp dimmer or switch to a lower wattage bulb. If the general air temperature is too cool, try adding another heat bulb to the cluster.

Tracking Temperature

To measure the general temperature of different areas of your terrarium, use two digital probe thermometers: one placed on the basking surface under the heat source, and another on the cool side of the setup.

Winter Cooling

Sheltopusiks generally occur in areas with a temperate climate, which means that they experience cold winters. For your pet's best health, ReptiFiles advises hibernating sheltopusiks in total darkness at 46-50°F / 8-10°C from October to March, with one month of transition time on each end.

Humidity

There are two subspecies of *Pseudopus apodus*: *P. a. apodus* and *P. a. thracius*. The former seems to tolerate lower humidity levels than the latter. If you know which subspecies you have, great! If you don't, don't worry too much about it.

Shoot for an **average daytime humidity of 40-60%, and an average nighttime humidity of 60-80%**. The lizard should have consistent access to a “humid hide” — a cave or hide with moistened substrate, placed on the cool end of the enclosure. This will help your lizard shed successfully and stay hydrated, and increases your chances of success if you happen to have a sheltopusik with higher humidity needs.

You can monitor humidity levels in your enclosure with a digital probe hygrometer with the probe placed in the middle. You will need another device if you want to monitor the humid hide separately.

To increase humidity levels in the enclosure, use a handheld pressure sprayer like the Exo Terra Mister. Distilled or reverse osmosis water works best if you want to avoid water spots.

Substrate

It's best to use a well-drained, naturalistic substrate that is similar to what is found in a sheltopusik's native habitat. This substrate should be layered 6" deep to allow for burrowing behavior, which will require about 120 quarts of substrate.

Here are a few options: DIY semi-arid mix: 60% clean topsoil, 40% play sand, Lugarti Natural Reptile Bedding, Bio Dude Terra Sahara bioactive kit

New sheltopusiks should pass quarantine before naturalistic substrate is added to their enclosure.

Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. Substrate should be completely replaced once every 3-6 months, depending on how diligent you are about daily cleaning.

Décor

Decorations play a vital role in your sheltopusik's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your pet's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nicer! Without décor, your terrarium is just an expensive box of dirt.

Here are some ideas: cork logs, cork flats, thick branches, leaf litter, magnetic ledges, artificial plants, sturdy live plants. You can also provide additional hideouts.

Arrange these items in a way that encourages your lizard to climb and explore, and provides a variety of places to sleep or shelter in.

Food

Sheltopusiks are *carnivores*, which means that they eat other animals. In the wild, they eat invertebrates, small birds and mammals, smaller lizards, and eggs. To replicate this diet in captivity, aim for a balance of roughly 60% invertebrates and 40% vertebrates and eggs. Both juveniles and adults should be fed daily, but to prevent obesity, don't offer more than the lizard is capable of eating in about 5-8 minutes.

Invertebrate options for sheltopusiks: crickets, dubia roaches, discoid roaches, black soldier fly larvae, mealworms, superworms, hornworms, silkworms, grasshoppers/locusts, snails (captive-bred ONLY)

Vertebrate options for sheltopusiks: young mice, young rats, young hamsters, house geckos, anoles, quail, chicks, chicken eggs, quail eggs, Reptilinks

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for your pet is VARIETY. Provide as varied of a diet as you possibly can, and you will be rewarded with a healthier pet that always looks forward to mealtime.

Feeder insects can be easily sourced online from reputable breeders such as Dubia.com, [Beastmode Silks](http://BeastmodeSilks), and [Luna Roaches](http://LunaRoaches). Vertebrate feeders can be purchased from high-quality breeders such as [Layne Labs](http://LayneLabs) and RodentPro.

Supplements

All insect feeders should be lightly “dusted” with calcium powder to balance the calcium-phosphorus ratio. Multivitamin powder can be used every once in a while to provide extra nutrients. All-in-one powders provide a balanced dose of both at once.

There are many options, but Repashy CalciumPlus LoD is a solid all-in-one supplement for getting started. For best results, use as directed by the label.

Drinking Water

Sheltopusiks should have free access to a shallow bowl of fresh, clean water daily. Scrub out the water bowl with veterinary-grade disinfectant every week to maintain good hygiene.