

An unusual Food item for a captive Northern Blue Tongue Skink *Tiliqua scincoides intermedia*.

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It is well known that some species of Lizards eat their own slough (otherwise known as Shed Skin)(Weigel, 1988) it was however mainly thought to be practised largely by the geckos (Greer,1989). I have observed this behaviour in both the Thick Tailed Gecko *Nephrurus milli* and the Knob Tailed Gecko *N. laevis*. There are anecdotal reports of Green Anoles *Anolis carolinensis* (An American iguanid) eating their own skin.

It is well known the Blue Tongue Skinks *Tiliqua* are omnivorous eating a wide range of prey both in the wild and in captivity. References to the variety of food taken can be found in Dennert 2004.

Over the last few years I have kept a large adult male Northern Blue Tongue Skink *Tiliqua scincoides intermedia*. He is kept individually in a large plastic tub with underfloor heating at one end this creates a hotspot of 35 degrees Celsius and as such provides a temperature gradient. Newspaper is used for a substrate and a water-bowl and shelter site at the cool end of the cage. Access to natural sunlight is provided when weather permits (usually once a week during winter and three times per week during summer). He is fed a highly varied diet from fuzzy mice and goldfish to various fruits and vegetables as well as commercially available products such as Bearded Dragon pellets. He is given two or three feeds per week during Spring, Summer and Autumn however he is cooled during winter and is not fed during this time. Sloughing usually occurs every two months during the active period (Spring to Autumn).

On the 30/7/2005 I found two significant scats left in the cage by the occupant this was unusual as while a few reptiles will defecate whilst cooled it is usually only uric acid as I keep the animals warm for two weeks prior to starting the cool down period to "empty them out" of any faeces before going into the "cold period". The lizard also appeared that it had just sloughed however no scales could be found within the cage.

An examination of the scats clearly showed the partially digested scales. This until now was only the first time this lizard had been proven that it had eaten its own slough however it was suspected on a couple of previous occasions when there was very little remaining slough left in the cage after a shed for the size of the individual. On speaking to a number of other reptile keepers it has been seen in the following other skink species: *Egernia c. cunninghami*, *E. depressa*, *T. nigrolutea* and *T. rugosus aspera*.

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References:

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