



Chameleons

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

There are three chameleon species commonly used in the pet trade:

Veiled Chameleon (*Chamaeleo calyptratus*): found in the mountainous regions of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. This species is distinguishable by the high casque on its head. The skin is usually skin green to brown.

Adult size: male- 20 inches, female- 12 inches

Temperature range: 68°-87°F

Humidity: 85-100%.

Panther Chameleon (*Furcifer pardalis*): found in Madagascar in tropical forests. The skin is vibrant blue to red, depending on sub-species.

Adult size: male- 20 inches, female- 10 inches

Temperature range is 70°-90°F

Humidity: 50-75%.

Jackson's Chameleon (*Chamaeleo jacksonii*): found at high altitude in Kenya, Uganda, and Northern Tanzania. Males have three horns. The skin color ranges from brown to green or bluish to yellow depending on sub-species.

Adult size: 12inches

Temperature range is 60°-80°F,

Humidity 50-75%.

DIET

Invertebrates: Crickets, gut-loaded with T-Rex Calcium plus or ILF formula. Silk worms and Phoenix worms are also good to add to the diet. You can purchase them from www.mulberryfarms.com. Avoid mealworms and waxworms because they are high in fat and phosphorus.

ENVIRONMENT

Chameleons should be kept in a cage that provides them with plenty of space to move around, climb, and hide.

Lighting: Chameleons require a specific wavelength of light called UVB. It is required for the proper absorption of calcium. We recommend using a full-spectrum bulb, the Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by ZooMed. Leave UVB bulbs on for 14 hours a day, and make sure that the bulb is not filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs need to be changed every 6 months as the amount of essential UVB naturally declines over time.

Heat: Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs. The temperature gradient varies according to species, but all should have a hot and cool end. Keep a thermometer where your chameleon sits in the hot end of the enclosure, and another in the cool end.

Substrate: Use paper-based bedding, such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News. Coconut fiber is also okay. Avoid all types of sand, including calcisand.

Moisture: Chameleons live in humid environments, and the level of humidity varies depending on species. Misting is required frequently. A drip system can be used also. Keep a hygrometer or humidistat in the enclosure to measure humidity.

Enclosure: Chameleons spend almost all of their time in trees. Provide many branches of varying thickness. Fake foliage and "safe" plants can also be added.

MEDICAL CARE

Exams: Bring chameleons in for an exam once a year. A blood panel may be recommended. We recommend repeating fecal tests every year to check for internal parasites.

Common Illnesses:

Parasitic Infection: Symptoms include: loss of appetite, inability to gain weight, and slow growth. Diagnosis is by fecal testing and treatment involves administering an oral anti-parasitic medication.

Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism (Metabolic Bone Disease): This condition is caused by lack of UVB lighting and poor nutrition. Symptoms include: limb and mouth deformities, lethargy, lack of appetite, and difficulty eating. Chameleons exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away.

Bacterial Infection: Chameleons are prone to bacterial infections. Symptoms include: anorexia, lethargy, swellings around the mouth or jaw, or a weakened grip.