

Ramblin' Exotics: General Panther Chameleon Care Information

Caging:

Although you do not have to start your new baby panther chameleon in an adult sized cage, we highly recommend doing so. This prevents you from needing to buy a new cage in another six months. **IT IS NEVER RECOMMENDED TO HOUSE MORE THAN ONE CHAMELEON IN A SINGLE ENCLOSURE.** There are multiple Screened Cage manufactures to choose from but these are our recommendations:

Males:

- Zoomed: Reptibreeze XL - Tall (Dims: 48x24x24") This cage is essentially the most common cage out on the market. I have included a link below.

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-screen-cages/403-reptibreeze-xl-zoo-med.html>

- Exoterra: Screen Terrarium – Large / X-Tall (Dims: 36x18x36") I have included a link below.

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-screen-cages/2853-screen-terrarium-large-x-tall-exo-terra.html>

(Although we keep adult panther chameleons in both of the cages listed above, our personal favorite is the Exoterra – Large / X-Tall)

Females:

Females may be placed in cages one size smaller than these, but we feel that bigger is always better no matter the sex of the animal. We consider the SMALLEST size cage provided to an adult female panther chameleon to be:

- Zoomed: Reptibreeze – Large (Dims: 36x18x18")

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-screen-cages/402-reptibreeze-lg-zoo-med.html>

Please note that Reptile Supply Co or any other supply company does not sponsor us, but this company generally has fair prices for their cages and various other supplies.

You may choose to go with a small cage at the beginning but you will need to plan to get a larger one in around six months, as your baby will outgrow a small cage around that period.

We recommend keeping the bottom of your cage clear of any substrates. Standing water and waste should be cleaned out regularly to avoid bacterial growth that could potentially harm your animal. Most cage companies offer a "Substrate Tray" that can help to make any clean up simple with the help of a hose and a proper sanitizer.

Lighting (Heat and UVB)

Housing chameleons indoors means that the lighting provided will play a critical role in their health and longevity of life. You will need to have two forms of lighting available to your chameleon: 1) Heat, 2) UVB

All lighting should be on a 12 HOUR, ON/OFF light schedule. We recommend timers outlets for your lights. This prevents the common mistake of forgetting to turn the lights on or off.

(1) HEAT (Temperature)

Panther Chameleons require a temperature gradient in their enclosures, with daytime temperatures ranging from 85-90°F for males at the hottest basking spot and 80-85°F for Females at the basking spot, to mid to lower 70's at the lower end of the cage.

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An incandescent light bulb will be required to provide the proper basking temperature that your animal requires. We use a standard Phillips BR30 Indoor Floodlight 75 watt bulb (Any standard lower wattage incandescent bulb can be used, as long as it reaches the required basking temperatures), elevated a few inches above the top of the cage to create the basking spot at the top, in one of the back corners of our enclosures. We recommend placing a horizontal branch no closer than six inches from the top of the screen, under the heat lamp. You do not want your heat lamps resting on the top of the screen. This can increase the chances of your animal burning itself on the hot screen / lamp. By placing the heat lamp in a back corner on top, you will create a localized heated spot within the cage and will allow the animal an opportunity to leave the heated area when needed.

- A standard Mini – Deep Dome, or the standard clamp lamp fixtures will work for your heat bulb:
<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-hoods-domes-fixtures/625-clamp-lamp-55-zoo-med.html>
<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-hoods-domes-fixtures/686-mini-deep-dome-zoo-med.html>
- A proper digital thermometer is recommended in order to properly measure temperatures in your cage. We recommend a laser digital thermometer to do this.

DO NOT PROVIDE ANY SOURCE OF HEAT AT NIGHT FOR YOUR ANIMAL UNLESS THE INSIDE OF YOUR HOUSE FALLS BELOW 55°F IN THE WINTER TIME. These animals require a nighttime temperature drop that is beneficial to their wellbeing. There should not be any light provided at nighttime either.

(2) UVB

UVB provides essential UV rays that simulate natural sunlight for your chameleon. These rays provide the animal with the required vitamin D3, which is necessary for the animal to process and absorb calcium into its bones. The best way to provide your animal with its necessary UVB is with a T5 High Output Florescent Light Fixture (T5HO for short). You may get away with using a T8 fixture but it is recommended to use a T5HO fixture, as it is an updated technology and its UVB output is known to be better. There are many different types of T5HO fixtures that you can use, but the most important part of this is that you use the necessary T5 UVB Bulb. Reptisun and Arcadia are both brands that provide excellent options for these fixtures and bulbs. Please be careful when choosing which bulb option to go with as the strengths of each of the bulbs required is dependent on the placement of your light fixtures on top of your cage, along with the basking branch placed under the bulb that you will offer the animal.

Here are our recommended UVB Bulb / Fixture options:

- If you decide that you will go with a **T8 Florescent Single Bulb Fixture** resting on the top of your cage, it is recommended that you use either a T8 Arcadia 12% UVB bulb or a T8 Reptisun 10.0 UVB Bulb, with a basking branch roughly 5-6" inches from the top of the cage under the UVB bulb.
- If you decided to use a **T5HO Florescent Single Bulb Fixture** (highly recommended) resting on top of your cage, it is recommended that you use either a T5 Arcadia 6% UVB or T5 Reptisun 5.0 UVB Bulb, with a basking branch around 6-9" from the top of the cage under the UVB bulb.
- If you decide to use a **T5HO Florescent MULTI bulb fixture** resting on top of your cage, it is recommended that you use either an T5 Arcadia 12% UVB or T5 Reptisun 5.0 UVB Bulb, with a basking branch around 7" from the top of the cage under the UVB bulb.

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***** We strongly advise against the use of compact florescent UVB bulbs that fit inside the typical dome lamp fixtures. These do NOT provide the required UVB output that chameleons need to stay healthy.**

Fixtures:

All of these fixtures are available in 24", 36" and 48" lengths to match the size of the enclosure that you choose.

- **24" T8 Fixture:**

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-hoods-domes-fixtures/3070-reptisun-terrarium-hood-t8-24-zoo-med.html>

- **24" T5HO Fixtures:**

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-hoods-domes-fixtures/1884-reptisun-terrarium-hood-t5-24-zoo-med.html>

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-hoods-domes-fixtures/3305-t5-uvb-light-reflector-24-lugarti.html>

If you intend to use live plants in your cage, it is recommended that you use a Dual T5HO light fixture. These fixtures include bulbs that are ONLY ADEQUATE FOR PLANT GROWTH. You will still need to replace one of the plant bulbs with the required UVB Bulb, but the plant bulb that remains in the fixture will provide the necessary lighting that your live plants will need to stay alive and healthy. Please see the link below for a common T5HO Dual light fixture.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IFIOYJ6/ref=twister_B01IFIOYIM?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1

UVB Bulbs

Unless you plan to invest in a UVI meter, it is recommended that you replace these UVB bulbs every nine months. Their UVB output will begin to diminish around this age.

- **24" T8 UVB Bulbs (For T8 Fixture)**

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/t8-uvb-bulbs/1875-reptisun-100-uvb-t8-fluorescent-bulb-24-zoo-med.html>

- **22" T5HO Bulbs (24" T5HO Fixtures require 22" T5HO Bulbs)**

Any one of these will be sufficient for a 24" single bulb T5HO Fixture

1. **Reptisun 5.0 Bulb** (Used for single bulb fixture)

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/t5-uvb-bulbs/1881-reptisun-50-uvb-t5-ho-fluorescent-bulb-22-zoo-med.html>

2. **Arcadia 6% Bulb** (Used for single bulb fixture)

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/t5-uvb-bulbs/3212-d3-6-uvb-t5-bulb-22-arcadia.html>

Any one of these will be sufficient for a 24" dual bulb T5HO Fixture

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3. **Reptisun 10.0 Bulb** (Used for dual bulb fixture)

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/t5-uvb-bulbs/1878-reptisun-100-uvb-t5-ho-fluorescent-bulb-22-zoo-med.html>

4. **Arcadia 12% Bulb** (Used for dual bulb fixture)

<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/t5-uvb-bulbs/2968-d3-12-uvb-t5-bulb-22-arcadia.html>

WARNING: If you do not provide the necessary UVB for your animal, it will result in the animal suffering from Metabolic Bone Disease. We recommend that ALL Chameleon Keepers do some research on this disease as it is one of the most common ailments in captive kept chameleons.

Plants:

Although the decision between fake and live plants inside your chameleon's enclosure is your decision, we highly recommend the use of live plants within your chameleon's enclosure. The plants help to not only maintain humidity but also diminish the risk for potential intestinal impactions from eating the fake plants.

-Fake Plants-

If you do decide to use fake plants, it is important to use fake plants that will collect water droplets, allowing your chameleon to drink off them. It is important to stay away from silk and cloth plants because they soak up the water. The leaves soaking up water may prevent the animal from being able to drink from them but also increases the potential for bacteria growth.

-Live Plants-

We personally prefer live plants for all of our enclosures, even the hatchling and juvenile cages. When choosing a live plant, it is important to consider multiple factors. Find a plant that will do well with the lighting that you intend to provide within your cage. You will also want to make sure that the plants are safe for your animal. Certain things such as sap can be poisonous to your animal. There is a very common and popular safe plants list found on this website:

<https://flchams.com/chameleon-safe-plant-list/>

Some of our favorite plants include but are not limited to:

- Schefflera Arbuticola
- Golden Pothos
- Wandering Jew
- Money Tree
- Weeping fig

****If you do decide to use live plants within your chameleon's enclosure, it is recommended that you thoroughly soak the plant and its roots with an antibacterial soap for a few minutes. This is to help remove any unwanted pests, potentially dangerous pesticides, and fertilizers. Once this is done please be sure to rinse/wash off the plant thoroughly as to be sure that all of the soap has been removed. It is recommended that you do this a second and even a third time. Once you feel that the plant has been washed thoroughly, replant it in an organic top soil mix. We also recommend that large pond stones be placed over the top of the soil in order to prevent your animal from attempting to or accidentally eating the soil.**

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Branches & Vines:

Branches and Vines are key factors in keeping your animal healthy and stimulated. These animals are tree dwellers, so they require lots of climbing options. We recommend not only vertical branches but also many horizontal branches throughout their enclosures. Horizontal basking branches are required under both the heat lamp and the UVB fixtures. The branch under the heat lamp should be located where a temperature reading of 85-90°F is provided directly under the heat lamp. These branches should be no closer than six inches to the top of the enclosure in order to prevent the chameleon from being burned. Please follow the distancing guides for branches under the UVB fixtures provided in the UVB section.

Creating a network of branches allows your chameleon to remain active and stimulated. Branch thicknesses should vary but we do not recommend branches that will be difficult to grab onto due to them being too thick or thin. We like to run Pothos Vines around our branches throughout the cage. Branch networks also give your chameleon an opportunity to move through the temperature ranges within the cage to regulate its temperature needs.

Hydration:

Proper hydration is critical in your chameleons care. Hydration can be provided by using a dropper, hand held mister and/or an automated misting system. There are many different options for both the handheld mister and automated misting systems.

- One of our personal favorite handheld misters is the large exoterra handheld mister:
<https://www.reptilesupplyco.com/wholesale-reptile-misters-foggers-drippers/61-mister-exo-terra.html>
(You do not have to use this one; a simple, clean spray bottle can work.)
- Our favorite misting system is the Mistking System, but a standard automated system such as the Exoterra - Monsoon system works very well for single cages.

Misting schedules are very important to maintain. Misting does not only provide the necessary hydration but also help to maintain appropriate humidity levels. Many recommended multiple misting sessions throughout the day. Your first required misting period should take place right after the lights come on, and should be in a 2-3 minute duration. The next required misting period should be shortly before the lights go out, and last another 2-3 minutes. When misting, you will want as much water coverage throughout the cage as possible. Water droplets should build up on the leaves of the plants throughout the cage. This provides adequate supply of water droplets for your chameleon to drink.

You may mist periodically throughout the day between the first and last of the day depending on your animal's needs, but it is important to provide ample time for the cage to dry out between misting. It is very important to pay attention to humidity levels throughout the day, as having too high of humidity levels during the day can lead to serious health problems including respiratory infections.

Water drippers can help to minimize the need for daytime misting. A slow, steady dropper provides a constant supply of water. It is important that your chameleon's enclosure has a way of collecting or draining the water that will build up at the bottom from misting / the dropper. Most screened cages offer a substrate / drainage tray or will come with them. We recommend purchasing one if it does not come with your cage. The substrate / drainage tray must be drained and cleaned regularly. Standing water will lead to bacteria growth, potentially leading to your chameleon getting sick.

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Humidity:

Humidity is another critical factor in keeping your chameleon healthy. A proper daytime humidity range is between 50-60%. The optimum nighttime humidity is between 70-100%. The higher the humidity is at nighttime, the better. Again, you do not want your daytime humidity to be too high, as this can lead to sickness. We recommend purchasing a digital hygrometer to keep track of your humidity levels.

Fogging:

Fogging (at nighttime only) is recommended as a great way to supplement hydration. We use the cool mist humidifier linked below on a timer from 12am-5am on and off in 30 minute intervals. It is important to routinely clean and sterilize the fogger, the base, and the tube.

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01CO9582Y/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1

Feeding:

Chameleon feeding requirements vary with age. The age and size of the animal will determine the amount and size of the food that is given.

- **Babies (2 - 4.5 Months Old):**

At this age, your chameleon will need 1/8" – 1/4" (7-14 Day Old) Crickets. They can also be fed captive breed domestic house flies at this age. They can eat between 10-15 feeders per day, six days a week.

- **Juveniles (4.5 – 12 Months Old):**

At this age, your chameleon is ready for 1/2" – 3/4" (3 Week Old) crickets. You should still feed between 5-10 feeders daily. You can begin to feed different types of feeders at this age, as long as they are an appropriate size. Once your animal reaches a year old, you may begin to see a change in appetite. They will likely begin to show signs of decreased appetite; do not be alarmed, as this is a sign of maturing.

- **Adult (1 year +):**

At this age, you can alter your chameleons feeding schedule to accommodate their appetite.

Adult Males appetite will generally start to decrease as it reaches its age of maturity. It is important to maintain a four-day a week or every other day, feeding schedule. Lowering the amount of feeders provided with each feeding can be done without concern. It is important to keep a close eye on your animal's appetite during this period.

Adult Female's appetite should not diminish as drastically. Their feeding schedule will not need to change as drastically, if at all. This is because they use more energy for egg product. You can drop back their feedings to six days a week at this stage, and you can lower the amount of food provided if the animal appears to be overweight or egg production needs to be reduced.

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Feeders:

There are a large number of feeder / prey items that can be provided to your animal. Crickets, Roaches, and Silk Worms can be fed as a staple part of their diet. Please see the Feeder guide provided with this care sheet for a broader list of potential feeders.

Gut Loading Insects:

A proper gut load is key to your animal's health. You get back what you put in to your animals food source. A proper feeder diet means that your animal will get better nutrients. Proper gut loading for Crickets and Roaches includes but is not limited to Collard Greens, Carrots, Butternut Squash, Sweet Potato and many others. We highly recommend including organic pee pollen granules as a staple part of your gut loading regiment as well.

Supplements:

Proper supplementation is important for maintaining adequate vitamin and nutrition. Calcium and multivitamins are a requirement. Two forms of Calcium are required, Calcium without D3 and Calcium with D3, as well as a multivitamin. We suggest each owner does his or her own research in regards to supplementation, as there are many differing opinions in regards to supplementation and their required schedules.

- Calcium **WITHOUT** D3 should be provided at every feeding

We use Repashy Supercal NoD, but there are many other options for calcium WITHOUT D3 that can be used.

- Calcium WITH D3 should be provided x2 a Month.

We use Repashy Calcium Plus LoD which is a multivitamin that contains calcium with D3 and is sufficient for both the D3 and multivitamin requirements.

- Multivitamin should be provided x2 a Month

If using Repashy Calcium Plus LoD twice per month, you will not need an additional multivitamin. If you are not, we recommend Rep-Cal Herptivite

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Female-Specific Care:

Female Panther Chameleons will lay eggs, regardless if they have breed with a male panther or not. If they have not been breed, the eggs are infertile and can be disposed of quite easily. Once a female panther chameleon reaches the age of five - six months, a lay bin will need to be kept inside her cage at all times.

Lay Bins:

We use 20-quart sterilite storage bins, filled half way with a soil mix. We also recommend putting a small plant in the bin. This is our preference as our females generally lay under the root system of the small Pothos plants that we have in their bins.

The bin should contain a soil mix that will maintain a tunnel. Many recommend a washed play sand, mixed with an organic potting soil. This mixture will allow the female to tunnel into the dirt, without the tunnel collapsing on top of them. There are many different mixtures of soil/sand that can be used to properly accommodate your female's needs. We recommend a simple 40/60 mix of a prewashed play sand and organic top soil. Moisten the sand/soil and mix it thoroughly before attempting to test it. You must be sure that this mix will hold a tunnel when dug into it. If your initial mix does not maintain a tunnel, add more of either to see which helps the best. A good test is to dig with a few fingers at an angle down in to the soil to see if the tunnel will hold. The prewashed play sand can be found at most home and garden stores such as Lowes or Home Depot.

Laying Time:

There are a few potential signs to look out for to know when it is almost time for your female lay her eggs. You should notice weight gain, even though your feeding schedule has not changed. You may also notice visible marble sized, egg shaped lumps in her stomach region. Some females will experience a loss of appetite, but this does not occur with all females. A key hint that she is ready to lay is that she will begin pacing at the bottom of her enclosure in search of a suitable place to lay her eggs.

When you notice that your female has started to dig in her bin, it is important to provide her with privacy. We understand the need to check on her periodically but doing so could result in her giving up on her tunnel and potentially becoming egg bound. You should leave your animal alone for the entirety of the time she is digging. If you do feel the need to check on her while she is laying, it is critical to do this in a manner that does not cause her to stop laying her eggs. Many keepers will cover the lower ½ to 2/3 of their animal's enclosure in order to make sure that the animal cannot see what is going on outside of her cage while she is digging. If you do this, do not cover the enclosure completely, only the bottom portion should be covered. It is critical to provide the required airflow, even while covering a portion of the enclosure.

Some females can complete the laying process in just a few short hours, while some can take up to two days to complete the process. Every chameleon is different. Give your female her space during this time. Please do not attempt to feed your female during the laying process unless you notice that she is at the top of her enclosure resting. If she is not resting at one of her basking spots, please give her the privacy that she needs. Once you know that she has finished laying her eggs, be sure to feed her plenty of food with her Calcium WITHOUT D3 supplement, and offer her plenty of water to drink. We recommending a few extra feeders every day for a few days after she has laid in order to help her build her strength back up. Once your female has completed her laying process, you may pull out her lay bin and dig out the eggs. Dispose of them properly and place the lay bin back into her cage.