Chameleon Care Sheet



Essential Guidance for Keeping Chameleons Healthy and Happy

# Habitat and Enclosure

## *Enclosure Type and Size*

* Screen Cages: Chameleons require excellent ventilation. Screen cages are preferred over glass terrariums as they reduce humidity buildup and provide fresh air, minimizing respiratory problems.
* Minimum Size: For an adult chameleon, a vertical enclosure of at least 24” x 24” x 48” is recommended. Bigger enclosures promote natural behavior and better thermal gradients. You can start a juvenile chameleon in an 18” x 18” x 36”

## *Substrate*

* Bare Bottom: Easiest to clean and prevents impaction hazards.
* Bioactive Substrate: Advanced keepers might use a bioactive setup with a drainage layer, organic soil, and live plants to mimic the chameleon’s natural environment.
* Paper towels: easiest to clean, works well for quarantining an animal.
* Reptisoil, coco fiber, Forest Floor: easy to clean an maintains humidity well.

## *Climbing Structures*

* Furnish the enclosure with sturdy branches, vines, and live or artificial plants. Chameleons are arboreal and need ample vertical and horizontal pathways for climbing and basking.
* Safe plants include Pothos, Ficus, Hibiscus, and Schefflera. Verify all plants are non-toxic and pesticide-free.

## Lighting and UVB

* UVB Lighting: Essential for calcium metabolism and bone health. Use a linear UVB bulb (5.0 or 10.0, depending on the species and enclosure height) and replace it every 6-8 months as its effectiveness decreases over time.

## Heating and Temperature Gradient

* Basking Spot: 85-95°F during the day, created with a heat lamp at the enclosure’s top.
* Ambient Temperature: 72-82°F .
* Night Temperature: Drop to 70°F to replicate natural conditions. Most chameleons tolerate moderate nighttime cooling.
* Use digital thermometers at multiple heights or a temp gun to monitor temperatures.

## Humidity and Hydration

* Humidity: Maintain at 50-70% for most species (Panther chameleons prefer slightly higher).
* Misting: Mist the enclosure 2-3 times daily with dechlorinated water. Automated misting systems or drip systems are highly recommended.
* Chameleons rarely drink from standing water; droplets on leaves stimulate drinking behavior.

# Diet and Nutrition

## Main Diet

* Chameleons are primarily insectivorous. Feed a variety of insects such as crickets, discoid roaches, black soldier fly larvae, silkworms, and hornworms.
* Panther and Veiled chameleons may consume some fruit or leafy greens, but insects should form the bulk of their diet.

## Supplementation

* Calcium: Dust insects with calcium powder at every feeding for juveniles, and every other feeding for adults.
* Multivitamin: Provide a reptile multivitamin with vitamin A (not beta carotene) once or twice a month.

## Feeding Schedule

* Juveniles: Feed daily (10-15 appropriately sized insects).
* Adults: Feed every other day (6-8 insects per feeding).

# Handling and Behavior

* Chameleons are solitary and easily stressed by frequent handling. Limit direct contact; instead, let them explore your hand at their own pace.
* Watch for signs of stress: very dark or very bright coloration, gaping, hissing, or retreating. Respect their boundaries for optimal health.

# Health and Wellness

## Common Health Issues

* Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD): Caused by insufficient calcium and/or UVB. Symptoms include weak limbs, jaw deformities, and tremors.
* Respiratory Infections: Poor ventilation, high humidity, or cold temperatures contribute to respiratory problems. Signs include wheezing, bubbling from the nose, and lethargy.
* Parasitic Infections: Regular fecal checks by a reptile veterinarian are recommended.
* Dehydration: Symptoms include sunken eyes, wrinkled skin, and poor appetite. Increase misting and seek veterinary advice if these signs appear.

**Vet Care:** If you notice your chameleon is lethargic, not eating for excessive periods of time, losing weight, struggling to move or breathe, consider reaching out to any of the following vets:

* Exotic Bird Hospital on Beach Blvd. (904) 256-0043
* Riverside Animal Hospital Downtown (904) 388-3494
* Birch Island Veterinary Center on Philips Hwy. (904) 717-6840
* Forever Vets Animal Hospital on Bartram Market Dr. (904) 490-8228