



Practice Limited to Birds, Reptiles and Exotics

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Chameleon Care Sheet

Gender & Sexing

Determining gender in many Chameleon species is usually easier in adults. Male **Veiled Chameleons** have a small, triangular lump on their back legs, right at the base of their foot. This is called a tarsal spur. You can also tell from their casque (the crest on their heads). This is a more difficult way of determining gender, and can only be seen later on in their development. The male casque is much straighter, pointing upwards, and can reach 4" high. The females are more curved, and do not reach as high. Male **Jackson's Chameleons** have 3 brown horns protruding from the nasal region. Female Jackson's do not have horns. In other species, males will generally display more prominent colors such as reds, blues, oranges and yellows. Females take on softer colors like shades of green, brown and some times orange variations.

Lighting, Temperature & Humidity

During the day it is important to offer lighting that creates a heat gradient of 80 degrees F to 95 degrees F. Your Chameleon will find its own comfort level by basking at different levels within the habitat. Do not use heating pads at the bottom, as this can seriously burn your pet. Chameleon's heat-sensors are on their backs, not their stomachs. At night, the lights should be turned off. You can also use a nighttime bulb, which creates the illusion of a tropical nighttime atmosphere. The heat gradient at night should be from 70 degrees F to 85 degrees F.

Humidity should be kept from 40-90% for most Chameleons.

Fluorescent lighting should be offered to provide the Chameleon with needed UVA and UVB rays. A broad-spectrum heat bulb should also be used at the top. At nighttime, use a night bulb, either a blue or red light, which still offers the Chameleon a heat source.

Diet

A variety of small soft-bodied insects (e.g., crickets, flies, butterflies, mealworms, waxworms, superworms) should be offered. All prey should be dusted with calcium powder. Juvenile chameleons should be fed daily. Adults can be fed every other day

Keeping the chameleon well-hydrated by providing drinking water in an appropriate misting system is extremely important. Misting systems are available for purchase at pet stores.

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Housing

A full-screen enclosure is a must for Chameleons. Glass aquariums can lead to respiratory diseases due to the stagnant air not being circulated, and they will be stressed if they can see their reflection. These Chameleons also need a large enclosure to climb around in; and smaller enclosures will stress them. A 3' x 3' x 3' habitat is best, but larger is better. Offer lots of vines to walk on and leaves to climb. Try to place some foliage between the outside and the **Chameleon**, as the activity in the room can stress them. For the bottom, use either a reptile carpet, or a digestible forest substrate from your local pet store. In the summer months, you should bring your Chameleon outside for natural ultraviolet light exposure. The sun helps provide natural vitamins for them that they cannot get otherwise. To help keep stress to a minimum, place the Chameleon in a wire cage (a bird cage works great), with places to walk and climb.

Disease & Sickness

1. Metabolic Bone Disease: This is one of the most important diseases to pay attention to and to prevent. It occurs when your Chameleon is not receiving enough calcium and Vitamin D for their bones to grow properly. You will see stunted-growth, soft bones, and possibly paralysis.

Treatment: Provide full-spectrum lighting, gut loading the feeder insects with healthy foods, and dusting the insects with a calcium/multi-vitamin powder.

2. Vitamin A Deficiency: This results in eye problems, respiratory problems, neurological dysfunction and difficulty shedding.

Treatment: Give a solution orally (usually by the veterinarian), dusting with multi-vitamin powder (2 times a week), gut load insects green leafy vegetables, carrots and sweet potato.

3. Hypervitaminosis

Excessive Vitamin A: This interferes with their metabolism in conjunction with Vitamin D3, which will result in metabolic bone disease. Excessive Vitamin A supplementation leads to toxicity of their organs.

Excessive Vitamin D3: High levels of Vitamin D3 and calcium combined will lead to toxicity of their organs. Also leads to metastatic calcification or gout, which usually appears as irregular, firm swellings over joints in limbs, or on ribs.

4. Renal Disease: This is a common cause of death in Veiled Chameleons. It is due to chronic dehydration, low humidity, and inadequate watering. Symptoms include anorexia, weight loss, depression, weakness and sunken in eyes.

Treatment: Monitor their water intake, making sure they are getting enough. Shower your Chameleon with a misting system, or provide a wooden perch in your bathroom shower. (20 - 30 minutes twice a week)

5. Respiratory / Sinus / Ocular Infections: Bacterial infections of this type are common. Symptoms include increased mucus, noise while breathing, open mouthed breathing, over inflation of lungs, sinuses involved with bumps and swelling on top of head or between eyes, eye problems, discharge, swelling, holding eye closed, sneezing, or a discharge of clear / white fluid.

Treatment: Treatment is aggressive and must be initiated early. An antibiotic treatment should be administered for 21 - 30 days (see your veterinarian). Give Vitamin A, more water, better ventilation (do not use a glass aquarium), and check all environmental temperatures.

We strongly recommend annual health examinations on all exotics!

