

Chameleon Care

Chameleons are native to rainforest and some desert environments. Their lifespan in captivity is typically 2-5 years. Commonly kept species include the veiled chameleon, the panther chameleon, and the Jackson's chameleon. All species have very specific needs and are generally considered to be difficult to keep in captivity. Maintaining an appropriate enclosure and diet are key to keeping your chameleon healthy.

Enclosure

Chameleons are generally solitary creatures and do best when housed singly. Inappropriate husbandry often leads to stress and disease.

- **Size and Construction:** Minimum cage size for most species is 2 x 2 x 3ft. Use a well ventilated, plastic-coated wire-welded mesh vertical enclosure.
- **Substrate:** Newspaper, paper towels, reptile carpet, or vinyl tile are easy to clean/replace. Untreated topsoil can also be used. Chameleons may eat bedding made of small particles, you should not use sand (including biodegradable calcium-based sands), wood chips, or gravel.
- **Lighting:** Provide a 5.0 ultraviolet B (UVB) light over the basking area (within 18 inches) for 12-14 hours in summer and 10-12 hours in winter. UV bulbs should be replaced every 6 months (even if the light is not burned out). UVB is necessary for appropriate absorption of calcium.
- **Water:** Most chameleons will not drink standing water from a bowl. Offer water either by misting the plants every 4-8 hours or with an automatic watering system. Many animals will drink water that has been misted or dripped onto the screening and plants. Some chameleons will drink water from a dropper or water bottle. If using a drip system, bubbler, or commercial mister ensure that it is cleaned thoroughly with a dilute bleach solution once or twice monthly to avoid bacterial overgrowth.
- **Cage Décor:** Provide numerous branches and plants to climb and shelter to hide in.
- **Maintenance:** Remove and replace soiled and wet portions of the substrate daily to prevent bacterial and fungal growth. Disinfect the enclosure with dilute soap or dilute bleach solution on a regular basis and rinse thoroughly.

Species	Temperature	Humidity
Veiled Chameleon	Maintain gradient of 70-95°F using overhead radiant heat source. Provide a 10-15°F drop in temperature at night	40-60% relative humidity
Panther Chameleon	Maintain gradient of 70-95°F using overhead radiant heat source. Provide a 10-15°F drop in temperature at night	60-80% relative humidity
Jackson's Chameleon	Maintain gradient of 70-80°F with a basking spot of 82-85°F Provide 10-20°F drop in temperature at night	60-100% relative humidity

Nutrition

- **Amount and frequency:** Feed juveniles daily and feed adults daily to every other day. Juveniles should be fed as much as they will eat, while adults should average approximately 5-15 adult crickets every 2-3 days.
- **Diet:** Chameleons are carnivores. Offer gut-loaded insects (e.g. crickets, mealworms, giant mealworms, wax moth larvae, roaches). To prevent injury to your chameleon, remove uneaten crickets immediately. Insects should be chosen based on the size of the lizard; insects should be no longer than the width of the chameleon's head.
 - To properly gut load, provide insects with a complete diet, such as rodent chow, dry dog food, or bird pellets prior to feeding.
- **Vitamin supplements:** Dust the non-breeding adult's diet with a calcium carbonate or calcium gluconate supplement once or twice weekly. Calcium supplements should be devoid or low in phosphorus with a minimum Ca:P ratio of 2:1. A general vitamin/mineral supplement may also be offered once weekly. The panther chameleon may be relatively sensitive to over-supplementation of vitamin A.



1010 Falkenberg Road
Brick, NJ 08724
732 892 2220
Admin@NAEVS.net

Handling

Always supervise children when they are interacting with chameleons. Never handle a lizard by the tail – it could break off. Chameleons are most comfortable when allowed to perch on a wooden dowel or finger.

Common Medical Conditions

- Nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism (metabolic bone disease)
- Egg binding or dystocia
- Ophthalmic (eye) disease
- Stomatitis (inflammation of oral mucosa) or dental disease

We highly recommend that your pet be seen for an annual physical examination with an experienced reptile veterinarian. Please consult a reptile veterinarian should you notice any change in behavior or concerning signs including, but not limited to: weight loss, decreased appetite/thirst, discharge from eyes and/or mouth, swelling, or twitching/seizures.