

Panther Chameleon

Furcifer pardalis

Adult Size: Males up to 20 inches. Females much smaller, almost half the size of males.

Life Span: Up to ten years in captivity, with an average lifespan of five. Breeding females tend only to live a couple of years.

Male/Female Differences: Males are almost twice the size of females and are much more brightly coloured

Compatibility: Panther Chameleons are solitary creatures and should be kept as such. Females may be introduced to a male's cage during breeding season, but should be removed as soon as possible.

Origin: Panther Chameleons are exclusively found on the island of Madagascar

Climate: Warm temperate, high humidity but not excessively hot.

Day Cycle: Diurnal (awake during the day)

Temperature: A gradient of heat from 75 – 85°F should be provided during the day with a basking point. Temp should drop 10 – 15° at night, but not below 65.

Lighting: Chameleons need a source of UVB light to properly metabolize calcium. This should be provided in the form of a reptile fluorescent or mercury vapor bulb in a normal day cycle (10 – 12 hours/day).

Humidity: High humidity is essential to a Panther's well being. 65-80%. Accomplish this by misting the cage several times daily or with the addition of moisture retaining decorations, such as live plants or water features.

Habitat/Territory: Jungle/Rain forest. Chameleons from different geographical areas in Madagascar can be identified by different colour markings.

Substrate/Bedding: Moisture retaining substrate is best, as it will help raise the humidity, as long as it is not allowed to become sodden and stagnant. Newspaper or cage carpet is quite sanitary when changed frequently, but can't retain moisture.

Hiding Place/Den: Your chameleon will feel comfortable high in the cage surrounded by real or artificial foliage.

Cage Type: An open air, screen mesh cage is necessary. Glass tanks do not provide adequate ventilation for chameleons, and reflections will stress them out. The cage should be large (at least 24 inches square) with lots of vertical space for climbing. Ensure that the wire mesh is appropriate for reptiles and will not abrade your chameleons feet.

Diet: A variety of well gut-loaded insects, consisting primarily of crickets, but also including meal worms, super worms, and wax worms – or even silk worms, caterpillars, or grasshoppers if you can find a clean source (insects from outside may contain parasites which can overrun your lizard in captivity).

Supplements: The insects being fed should be lightly dusted with a calcium supplement 5-7 times per week, and a multivitamin supplement once or twice per week.

Diet Precautions: In general, avoid feeding too much of any one prey item. Ensure that your insects are properly gut-loaded (fed a high vitamin food for at least 24 hours before offering them to your lizard). Always supplement with calcium and provide proper lighting to keep your lizard's bones healthy.

Feeding: Daily. 6-7 prey items for juveniles. As your chameleon grows, larger prey items, such as pinky mice, can be offered, or more smaller items.

Water Source: Chameleons will not drink stagnant water. They enjoy drinking water from leaves or decorations after the cage has been misted, or water that is constantly moving. Because of this and their high-humidity requirements, an automatic mister or water feature is a good investment.

Grooming: As long as proper humidity is maintained, your lizard should shed easily. If the environment is too dry, then you may need to correct the humidity levels and gently remove any unshed skin.

Oral and Foot Care: Make sure there are no sharp edges or excessively rough, abrasive surfaces in the cage, as chameleons like to climb over everything.

Proper Handling: Panther Chameleons should be handled rarely. It stresses them out a great deal. If you need or want to occasionally pick up your chameleon, it should be scooped up gently from underneath, or delicately shooed onto your hand from its perch. Avoid pulling the animal from a perch as you may dislocate joints.

Habitat Maintenance: Plants or decorations should be cleaned of feces when they are apparent. Substrate should be changed monthly and the cage disinfected with distilled vinegar or a 5% bleach solution.

Health Concerns: Metabolic bone disease results from lack of calcium supplementation or improper lighting. MBD manifests as swollen or bowed limbs, listlessness, and refusal to feed. Improper temperatures can lead to dehydration on the high end and improper digestion on the low end.