



Yemen Chameleon

Yemen or Veiled Chameleons are gentle, intelligent and confident lizards, which makes them interesting and rewarding pets. They grow to around 500mm in length and show real personality. They are easy to keep when the correct environment is provided and are regularly bred in captivity.

Selecting Your Yemen Chameleon

When purchasing a Yemen Chameleon it is recommended to go to a reputable reptile shop or breeder. They will be only too happy to let you see the selection of Chameleons they have available. The chameleon should be confident with handling although hatchlings often take a minute or two to settle down. They should be bright and clean looking. Check the chameleon is alert and strong looking. They change colour with moods, so when choosing a youngster go for the nice green one and avoid the darker ones. If you plan to keep just one it is advisable to choose a male, which is distinguished by the spurs on the heel of their hind feet. Males will live a lot longer than females 5-6 years instead of 2-3 years. If you do have male and females be prepared for them to breed. Females will produce eggs without mating, a suitable nesting box should be provided for gravid (pregnant) females. Egg binding is an issue and can kill the chameleon.

They can be kept in pairs or groups so long as there is no more than 1 male as they are very territorial, groups will need a lot of room as they can they are prone to stress when in constant contact.

Housing

Yemen Chameleons are large and active, arboreal species so should be given a large vivarium, a minimum size of 610 x 915 x 610mm (Length x height x depth) (24x36x24"). A wooden Vivarium is recommended as they are better insulated than glass or plastic tanks, so therefore easier to get the heating set up correctly. A wooden vivarium will offer more privacy as they only have a glass front. Mesh enclosures are becoming more popular, but they are affected a lot by external factors such as drafts.

Heating

Temperature is very important in reptile care as they cannot produce their own body heat and need to be kept within a suitable range to help the body function correctly.

These temperatures can be achieved by using basking lights. A thermostat should always control basking lights. The basking temperature should be around 32-35°C (90-95°F) with an ambient temperature of 24-32°C (75-90°F).

At night the basking lights should be switched off and the vivarium should drop to between 19 and 24°C (66-75°F)

It is very important to know what the temperature is, so check regularly with an accurate thermometer. **Do not** guess or take temperature by hand (if it feels warm or cold)

Lighting

Yemen Chameleons require UV light to help use calcium from their diet and prevent Metabolic Bone Disease. We recommend using lamp with 10-12% UVB such as Zoo Meds ReptiSun 10.00 or the Arcadia D3+. These lamps need replacing every 12 months.

A simply 12 hour light cycle is ideal for a Yemen Chameleon.

Water

It is important to provide your chameleon with fresh water every day, they will not drink from a bowl so this should be provided by spraying the vivarium with water first thing in the morning. This is only done once a day as the chameleons originate from a very arid region an high humidity can cause respiratory problems. Dehydration can be a problem so it is important not to neglect the spraying.

Hides and Décor

Yemen chameleons require a a few good branches of different sizes to climb on. The vivarium can be decorated with plastic plants as these look very attractive and offer some privacy. These will also be used by the crickets and locusts to hide in, encouraging your chameleon to actively hunt them. Live plants however are a poor choice, as the heat will kill them very quickly and the chameleons and crickets will eat them.

Feeding

Yemen chameleons are mainly insectivorous and will eat crickets, locusts, mealworms, and wax worms. Crickets and locusts are to be used as the main foods as they are lower in fat than wax worms and easier to digest than mealworms. Vitamin powders are very important to prevent problems such as Metabolic Bone Disease, which is a calcium deficiency, and can be a serious problem and happen very quickly with young Chameleons that are growing quickly. It is easy to prevent with the regular use of vitamin powders. Insects should only be offered to your chameleon every other day.

Treats of mealworms and wax worms can be offered occasionally.

Chameleons will also eat leafy salads, such as Rocket, Water Cress, Dandelions and mixed salads which are readily available and easy to use. Try to offer variety to keep a balanced diet. Salads should be offered everyday, it is easiest to hang large leaves up in the branches away from the heat.

Maintenance

Chameleons can produce quite a lot of waste so the vivarium and decorations should be cleaned regularly. Depending on cage conditions, remove all substrate & cage furniture and

completely disinfect using safe disinfectant. Rinse the enclosure thoroughly and allow to dry before replacing cage furniture and your chameleon.

Shedding

Yemen chameleons shed their skin as they grow and will do so a little at a time. They rarely have any problems shedding.

Conclusion

Yemen chameleons are rewarding pets to keep. Be prepared for the amount of food and space they require.

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