



Husbandry Requirements for Chameleons.

Vivarium Size: The vivarium should be at least twice the length of the chameleon and 2 – 3' high as chameleons like to climb.

Temperature Gradient:

All reptiles need a temperature gradient in their vivarium: i.e. one end cooler than the other so that they can then select where they are most comfortable to achieve their Preferred Body Temperature (PBT). Heat lamps should therefore be placed at one end of the vivarium not on the side.

Chameleon temperature range: 21 – 38 °C (21°C at night).

UVB light: This is advised for Chameleons particularly if at risk of or showing signs of Metabolic Bone Disease. Bulbs should provide 6% UVB and need to be changed every 3 - 6 months.

Photoperiod: Lights should be kept on for 12 hours a day leaving a 12 hour 'night' period – although it is even better if the photoperiod mimics the natural habitat of the chameleon.

Diet: Chameleons are mainly insectivores and about 50-60% of their diet should comprise small insects such as small hoppers or crickets 2 – 3 times per week dusted with calcium powder. The balance should be chopped leafy green vegetables provided each day. Neutrobal (a calcium/vitamin D supplement) should also be given once a week.

Water: Chameleons only drink by licking dew from leaves so branch matter should be provided with frequent misting – 6-8 times per day with cooled boiled water. Chameleons also require high levels of humidity – 75-80% which is much higher than a normal household level and frequent misting helps to maintain this level. A large bowl of water can also be provided with easy access in and out to assist with humidity – the water should be changed regularly, at least 30% per week and allowed to stand for 24 hours to de-chlorinate. Finally there are commercial misting units available which mist automatically at frequent intervals.

Environmental enrichment:

A hide should always be provided – preferably two, one at the warm end of the vivarium and one at the cool end so the dragon can use whichever is at the most comfortable temperature.

Chameleons need branches to climb through and leaves to drink from: some branches should be higher up near the UV source to provide a basking area. Hot rocks immediately under the heat lamp or hide are not a good idea as they can get too hot and cause burns.

Newspaper is a good floor lining or substrate as it is easy to clean and to monitor urinary and faecal levels produced.

