

warm climate chameleon care sheet



Warm climate chameleons are known for their ability to change colors and for the long, sticky tongues they use to catch their food. Chameleons can move each eye independent of the other.

facts

average adult size: up to 24 inches
depending on species

average life span: up to 5+ years
with proper care
depending on species

diet: insectivore

Will reach adult size in 9 to 12 months, depending on species and under ideal conditions; upgrade habitat size as your reptile grows.



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

warm climate chameleon

includes carpet, panther and veiled chameleons

care sheet



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diet

A well-balanced warm climate chameleon diet consists of:

- A variety of insects, including gut-loaded (recently fed) crickets, mealworms and waxworms.
- Juvenile chameleons may eat dark, leafy green vegetables such as collard greens; pothos and ficus leaves.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your warm climate chameleon:

- Rely on moisture on plants for water; mist plants 4 to 5 times a day and/or use a dripper.
- Feed daily. Juveniles should have a constant supply of food.
- Sprinkle food with calcium supplement daily and a multi-vitamin supplement once or twice a week.
- Vegetables not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

housing

- Size - Appropriately sized and shaped habitat to accommodate normal behavior and exercise,

preferably taller than wide, with screened sides. Chameleons do better in a well-ventilated habitat. Habitats constructed of mesh or screen are recommended.

- Habitat - Create a dense area of non-toxic plants on one side for hiding; create a more open, exposed area of branches for basking on the other side. When selecting branches, consider the width compared to the size of the chameleon's feet and their ability to grab on to them. Maintain up to 70% humidity (depending on species). Mist plants as needed to provide water for your chameleons to drink, even if you have a dripper.
- Substrate - Use alfalfa pellets, sphagnum moss and mulch-type substrates.
- Temperature - Temperature gradient (100°F for the warm end and 70°F for the cool end). Use an incandescent light or ceramic heater as primary heat source.
- Lighting - UVB rays with full spectrum lighting for 10 to 12 hours a day is required. An incandescent

day bulb can be used for basking area during daylight hours only; can use a ceramic heater or nocturnal or red incandescent at all hours.

- House adult chameleons separately and do **not** house different reptile species together.

normal behavior

- They are tree-dwellers and reside on branches and in plants exclusively.
- Chameleons change color, depending on temperature and mood.
- Males are generally larger and more vibrant and colorful than females.
- Most chameleons become highly stressed when handled; regular handling is not recommended.

habitat maintenance

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the habitat at least once a week; place chameleon in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all traces of bleach smell; dry the tank

and furnishings completely and add clean substrate.

grooming and hygiene

- Chameleons regularly shed their skin; ensure humidity of habitat is at appropriate level to allow proper shedding. To facilitate shedding, provide a shed box, a hide box with sphagnum moss, that will aid in the shedding process.

signs of a healthy animal

- Active and alert
- Clear eyes
- Body and tail are filled out
- Healthy skin
- Clear nose and vent
- Eats regularly

red flags

- Weight loss or decreased appetite
- Mucus in mouth or nose
- Swelling
- Lethargy
- Bumps, sores or abrasions on skin
- Labored breathing
- Paralysis of limbs
- Abnormal feces
- Non-rotating eye(s)

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian.

common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Gastro-intestinal disease	Runny stools, caked or smeared stool around the vent area and loss of appetite caused by bacterial or parasitic infection.	Consult your veterinarian.
Metabolic bone/vitamin deficiency	Inability to absorb calcium due to insufficient UVB light or improper amounts of calcium/vitamin D. If untreated, can lead to a disorder characterized by deformities and softened bones. Swollen limbs and lethargy.	Consult your veterinarian and provide ample UVB lighting and proper calcium/vitamin supplements.
Respiratory disease	Labored breathing and mucus in the mouth or nose. Can be caused by a habitat that is too cold or damp.	Consult your veterinarian and ensure habitat is the proper temperature.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized and ventilated habitat
- Substrate
- Water and mealworm dishes
- Plants
- Heat light
- Heat fixture
- Dripper
- Climbing décor
- UVB lighting and fixture
- Vitamin supplement
- Calcium supplement
- Cricket keeper
- Cricket food
- Cricket quencher
- Thermometer
- Humidity gauge
- Book about warm climate chameleons

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on warm climate chameleons and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all reptiles are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your reptile or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for reptiles and should consider not having a reptile as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about small animals and disease.

This Care Sheet can cover the care needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

