



Blue Ridge Reef & Pet
102 WNC Shopping Ctr Dr.
Black Mountain, NC 28711
(828) 669 – 0032
www.blueridgereef.com

Caring for Your Veiled Chameleon

Chameleons do not have a reputation for being an easy reptile to keep in captivity. The reason is that much was not understood about their requirements until the last decade or so. Now chameleons of all kinds are being produced in captivity and can be expected to live long lives (up to 10 years) with proper care. The hardiest species of chameleon to keep in captivity is the veiled chameleon. This page is a brief overview of their care.

Is a Chameleon For You?

Chameleons have to be fed live insects every day. They need a large screen cage. They will not drink standing water and need dripping or running water daily. They need UV lighting and supplemental heat. They are not an animal that responds well to too much handling. If you are looking for a pet that can be fed once a week, consider a snake. If you want an animal to hold often, a rodent would be a better choice. Chameleons are beautiful and fascinating creatures in many ways; they catch food with their tongue, they can change color, and their eyes move independently of each other. They are more a specimen than a “pet,” however. They can be handled, but this is stressful for them and should be kept to a minimum.

Caging

Chameleons do best in a screen cage. Fresh air is important for them, and if they see their reflection in glass, it can cause undue stress. Avoid too drafty an area. Lighting is crucial; it provides both heat and UVB rays. Be sure and get a proper bulb, most on the market do not produce UVB. 80 to 95 degrees is a good daytime temperature, 70 to 80 is adequate for night, when the cage should be dark. Offer lots of sturdy branches for climbing and some vegetation (real or fake) to provide cover. An exposed chameleon is a stressed chameleon and like with tropical fish, stress kills. If you have an active household with children or pets, consider putting your chameleon’s cage up high, where it won’t feel threatened by passersby. If you have a female or do not know the sex, you MUST offer a six inch deep pan of fine sand for her to lay eggs in. She will lay eggs whether there is a male around or not, and if she can’t find a place to lay, she will almost always die.

Feeding and Watering

Crickets of an appropriate size are the standard menu item for chameleons. It is a great idea to calcium dust and “gut load” the crickets before feeding. Gut loading is simply feeding the crickets vitamin rich foods. Butter worms and Phoenix worms are a great addition because of their high levels of calcium. Adult chameleons will sometimes eat greens, and that is an excellent vitamin boost. Watering is the most aggravating part of keeping chameleons for me. They simply have no interest in standing water. You can use a dripper, put an ice cube on the top of the screen cage, use an automatic waterfall, or mist the cage (NOT the lizard) twice daily. Drippers or waterfalls are the easiest methods. By following this guideline you should be on your way to a healthy chameleon, but please visit www.chameleonjournals.com for more in depth information.

- Chip Bridges