



## Jackson Chameleon

Order:	Squamata
Suborder:	Lacertilia (Sauria)
Family:	Chamaeleonidae
Species:	Chamaeleo Jacksonii

### General

In 1972, the Jackson's Chameleon (*Chamaeleo jacksonii*) was introduced to the Hawaiian Islands from its native land of Kenya and Tanzania. In the last 30 + years, these species have multiplied and formed a large breeding population on Oahu, Maui, Kauai, and Hawaii. In particular they can be found on the Koolau range, Oahu. Their abundance may be underestimated based on the fact that these chameleon's are difficult to see unless you happen to look right at one.

Chameleons in general are amazing creatures. They have independently focusing eyes that allow them to see 360 degrees. Their tongue is 1.5 times the length of its body and has a type of suction cup on the end that allows them to snatch up prey. Individuals are highly territorial and live solitary lives, defending their home turf. Males have three long horns, while females do not. And, of course, as is so well known, chameleons can change the color of their skin if frightened.

Chameleons are best known for their ability to change color. This allows them to disappear into their environment and communicate with other chameleons. Chameleons are pets that are best viewed and not handled. Most chameleons are very territorial; it is best if either a male/female pair or trio (one male, two females) be kept together or a single male kept by himself. All chameleons are similar in that they hunt with the use of a specialized eyes and tongue. The chameleon's eyes rotate independently of each other to allow them to focus intently upon their prey. Once they prey is in view (and within range) their sticky tongue has the ability to shoot out and select prey up to one body lengths away.

### Temperature & Humidity

The ideal daytime temperature for Jackson's is between 70 and 75 degrees with a basking area with multiple branches reaching 82 degrees (ideally) There should be multiple branches throughout the habitat to allow for the regulation of body temperature. Nighttime temperatures should drop down to 60-70 degrees Temperature fluctuations are absolutely necessary and their environment should never be hot and stuffy. This can be achieved with a basking lamp and several climbing branches. The ideal humidity range is 50% or higher. This can be achieved through frequent daily misting.

### Lightning

Chameleons do best with access to natural sunlight, but this is not feasible as a sole source of UV radiation for most owners. Incandescent and full spectrum (UV) fluorescent lighting is necessary. In addition, allowing some exposure to natural sunlight through an open window (glass filters out nearly all of the necessary UV radiation) will help keep chameleons happy and healthy (or placing the chameleon outdoors if the weather is appropriate, providing adequate shade to prevent overheating).

Fluorescent ultraviolet light should be provided for 12-14 hours each day.

### Feeding

Chameleons seem to do best on a variety of insect foods. Try to feed as many types of insects as possible. Crickets, meal worms, super worms, wax worms, wax moths, non infesting roaches are all good items to feed. Prey food should be gut loaded with nutritious foods (leafy greens, vegetables, fruit) prior to feeding, and should be dusted with a calcium and vitamin D supplement. Chameleons may be susceptible to overdosing with vitamin A (hypervitaminosis A) so supplements must be balanced carefully. Again, the care sheets below cover details of supplementation. Keep in mind that egg laying females will need extra calcium supplies. Also, some nutritious leafy green (avoid spinach, lettuce, and cabbage) and other vegetables and fruits can be offered in small amounts as chameleons will occasionally sample these.

### Water

Chameleons get their water from droplets on leaves - as a rule they will not take water from a dish. Adequate water intake must be provided either through a drip system or by misting the enclosure at least twice daily. Drip systems can be purchased or fashioned from a water container with a pinhole placed on top of the cage, or even by placing ice cubes on top of the cage to melt slowly and drip into the cage. If a drip system is used, keep the watering location consistent so the chameleon knows where to find water. Misting will also help keep the humidity levels up. If a drip system is used, the excess water should be collected and removed though, to prevent the humidity from getting to high.

### Warning

Chameleons are easily stressed, so cages should be placed in low traffic areas (a quiet room is ideal), and barriers (e.g. lots of foliage in the cage) between the chameleon and household activity should be provided. Avoid handling the chameleon and when observing the chameleon move slowly. They are fascinating and amazing, but need some special considerations to keep them stress free and healthy.