



ANIMAL CARE SHEET



Panther Chameleon

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Family:	Chamaeleonidae
Genus:	Furcifer
Size:	Male length: Up to 23cm Female length: Up to 13.5cm

General

Exhibiting some of the most spectacular colour variations of all chameleons, the large-bodied panther chameleon (*Furcifer pardalis*) is highly sought after by reptile keepers. Interestingly, populations from different locations within this species' range each have a particular colouration and patterning, which is generally most pronounced during courtship or defensive displays. Male panther chameleons from the Madagascan island of Nosy Be, for example, have uniform striking blue-green, emerald-green or turquoise bodies, whereas males from the north-west coast are vivid pink, with a yellowish white stripe along the flanks, a colour form known as "the pink panther." Other colours found in the males may include orange, red and dark green, with a hugely variable patterning of coloured bands, stripes and spots, especially around the head and eyes.

By contrast, female panther chameleons are mostly dull, uniform grey, brown or faint green, except during breeding, when receptive females become pale or vivid orange to pink, later changing to black, with bright orange or pink vertical bars when gravid. Like many other chameleon species, the panther chameleon's head extends at the rear into a raised bony prominence known as a "casque"

Range

Endemic to Madagascar, the panther chameleon is found in coastal regions and islands of central-eastern, north-eastern, northern and north-western Madagascar. Introduced populations are also found on the islands of Reunion and Mauritius, around 500 kilometres east of Madagascar

Habitat

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The panther chameleon mainly inhabits lowland, humid forest. They do well in a variety of enclosures but prefer at least two sides of screen for ventilation. Enclosures should be decorated with a variety of fake or live plants, vines and sticks for climbing. Panthers need both heat and full spectrum uv. Temperature gradients can range from ambient 70s to 90 degree basking zones. Panthers thrive when kept solo. Males must be isolated from other males and females. You may opt to house two females together if you have a large enclosure so that each can establish her own territory.

The habitat should be at least 36 inches high, 30 inches in length and 16 inches wide. Chameleons like to climb, so the higher the cage the better. It should also be very well ventilated. Keep the humidity at

Captive Environment

65% or higher. And be sure to mist the branches and leaves twice a day to help maintain humidity levels. Daytime temperatures should be between 75 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit, with a basking zone between 90 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Night time temperatures should range between 65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Add live trees and plants plus artificial reptile branches for climbing and entertainment purposes. Line the floor of the habitat with reptile carpeting or other bedding. Daytime lighting should consist of UVA/UVB fluorescent bulb for about 12 hours of light per day to help with the processing of calcium.

Housing/lighting:

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Water:

We recommend a dripper bottle that drips water onto the leaves and branches in the enclosure. Chameleons will drink off of the leaves. Panthers prefer humid conditions. Mist daily to keep up humidity levels and/or use a humidifier if necessary.

Food:

Panther Chameleons are insectivores. They are extremely entertaining to watch feed due to the length and speed of their sticky tongues. Feed your chameleon appropriately sized prey—food items that are too large can harm your chameleon.

Chameleons will eat numerous types of insects. When feeding crickets, make sure your source of crickets is clean. Never feed crickets bought from a store that does not clean the cricket container. You may gutload your crickets with commercial cricket diet and/or we suggest offering your crickets fresh fruit, greens, and water. Remove all old food from your cricket container. Mold can be toxic to your lizards. We suggest using a moistened paper towel/sponge, citrus, or carrots to provide water for your crickets.

Whenever possible try and provide a variety of appropriate sized prey items for your chameleon including super worms, silk worms, roaches, grasshoppers, and a variety of other bugs (not fireflies). However we strongly suggest not using bugs found outside, as they may have pesticides that can kill your chameleon. Also, use waxworms in limited amounts, if at all. They contain little nutritional value, and although relished by lizards, contain high amounts of fat.

Supplementation:

There are many different and often contradictory opinions/views on supplementation. Calcium, D3, and vitamin supplementation are necessary for your chameleon. However, supplementation will depend on what you feed your Panthers, the bulbs you use, and how much natural sunlight they receive. Many sources recommend supplementing small chameleons daily and decreasing to once or twice per week for adults. But both too little and too much supplementation can lead to problems. Therefore, we recommend going over this with your vet to find a schedule that suits the specific needs of your lizard. We suggest you supplement your young chameleons daily with a ratio of 1 part Rep-Cal Herptivite to 3 parts Rep-Cal calcium with Vitamin D3.

Biology

An invertebrate-feeding specialist, the panther chameleon moves slowly and stealthily through vegetation, its fused, opposing digits providing a pincer-like grip, while its independently-moving eyes scan the surroundings. Once prey has been sighted it is caught by means of the panther chameleon's remarkable, extensile tongue. The contraction of special muscles within the tongue rapidly propels it towards the prey, which is snared by a combination of the tongue's sticky mucous coating and a vacuum created by muscles in the tip.

While most panther chameleons breed during the spring and summer (October to March), populations found in more climatically stable regions along the west coast may breed all year round. The mature male panther chameleon establishes a territory, which is defended from other males, and offers a site where courtship can take place. When a female is encountered exhibiting receptive coloration, the male

commences courtship behaviour, which includes an increase in colour intensity and nodding of the head. Over a period of minutes to days after mating, the female acquires the striking, non-receptive colouration, and will make threat displays consisting of opening the mouth wide and rocking, to any courting males that approach.

At the end of the two to three week gestation period, the female digs a burrow into which a clutch of 16 to 24 eggs is laid and covered over with soil. The eggs take between six and twelve months to hatch, and the newborns then clamber to the surface. Sexual maturity is reached after around five months, and the maximum lifespan in the wild is two years

Threats

Extremely popular in the pet trade, exported panther chameleons accounted for almost eight percent of total exports of chameleon species to the US from 1977 to 2001. Prior to the imposing of stricter trade quotas, 15,000 panther chameleons per year were being taken from the wild, a level of exploitation which was a significant cause for concern given this species' restricted range. Fortunately, however, current export levels are much lower, and with relatively abundant wild populations, there is little risk to this species at present

Conservation

The panther chameleon is listed on Appendix II of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and any international trade in this species is therefore strictly controlled and regulated by annual maximum export quotas. Although exports in this species have previously been alarmingly high, since 1999 the maximum export quota has been set at 2,000 individuals per year, which appears to be sustainable.

Aside from trade, a major threat to all Madagascan wildlife is the ongoing habitat loss and degradation occurring throughout Madagascar. While the panther chameleon seems to be relatively resistant to this problem, it would nevertheless benefit from management measures that ensure the preservation of tracts of forest alongside roads and rivers.

Breeding

Studies show that females when bred usually live up to 2 to 3 years after laying eggs due to the stress put on their bodies. The females can lay anywhere between 10 to 40 eggs per breeding session. And they can generally lay 5 to 8 sessions. Eggs can take between 5 and 14 months to hatch. Wild Panther Chameleons usually reach sexual maturity at a minimum age of 7 months.