**Chameleons – Care Sheet**

**Veiled:** *Chamaeleo calyptratus*

**Jackson’s:** *Trioceros jacksonii*

**Panther:** *Furcifer pardalis*

Is it…brown? Green? No, maybe it’s blue? If you’re asking these questions about a reptile, you are most likely talking about a chameleon. Besides being able to change into some truly amazing color schemes, their independently moving (a bit googly) eyes, prehensile tails, and funny faces, chameleons can provide endless entertainment for their owners. Making sure to take the proper steps to provide good care will help them live longer, happier lives. As always, it is important to thoroughly research the care of the specific chameleon species you are interested in keeping.

**Basic Info**

Age: 4-6 years. Proper care will help them live to the longer end of this scale.

Size: 8 to 24 inches, depending on sex and species

**Behavior**

While they are fun to look at, chameleons are shy by nature and get stressed out pretty easily. They tend to hide when they are stressed, which could be due to things such as being excessively handled or being placed in an enclosure with another chameleon (they do best when living alone). While they may become accustomed to being handled, it must be gently. They also will not like being passed from person to person or being “shown off.” Children must be supervised when handling a chameleon.

**Diet**

Chameleons are mostly insectivores, other than veiled chameleons which will eat some plant material as well. Feed your chameleon a variety of insects including crickets, Dubia roaches, phoenix worm, mealworms, waxworms, flies, moths, earthworms, caterpillars, and grasshoppers which have been fed a healthy, gut-loading diet. If you are breeding your own crickets, they will benefit from a diet of dark, leafy green vegetables, oats, and various fruits and veggies. Insects should be dusted with a calcium powder (without Vitamin D3 or phosphorus) 3-5 times a week. It is also important for them to have a weekly multivitamin supplement that specifically has vitamin A (not beta-carotene), as they are very prone to vitamin A deficiency. You can also finely chop up leafy green vegetables for veiled chameleons. Juveniles should be fed daily and adults daily to every other day. You should give them as many

insects as they can eat in a single feeding, and then remove

the leftovers. Consult your veterinarian for more information.

Additionally, make sure your chameleon always has clean, fresh water available. Chameleons drink by licking up droplets of water, so you will need to invest in a “dripper” system and also mist frequently throughout the day.

**Environment & Caging**

Chameleons like to climb and hide. As such, you should provide them with an enclosure that is quite tall and features a great deal of leaves and branches. We recommend ficus and pothos plants, since chameleons can safely eat them. Avoid sappy trees when picking out branches; opt instead for hardwood branches of differing sizes or flexible artificial vines.

Since chameleons spook easily, it is important to keep its cage in a lightly trafficked part of your home, so there is not a lot of ambient noise and movement. Make sure the branches you place in there are quite leafy so that it will feel protected. In addition, the enclosure should:

* Have a UV light that can provide light on the UVB spectrum for 12 hours a day
* Be kept at a daytime temperature of 77-85°F with a basking spot of 85-90oF for veiled chameleons and 90-95oF for panthers. Do this by placing a heat lamp on top or using a ceramic heat emitter. Avoid hot rocks or other under-cage heating methods, as these can cause injury. Your chameleon will want to bask under the light.
* Has a humidity level of 70-80 percent, depending on the species. You can do this by misting the tank or purchasing a misting system. A misting system on a timer is a much easier and more reliable way to make sure the humidity stays high and your chameleon always has water to drink.
* Is lined with newspaper, paper towels, or repti-carpet. Avoid other liners such as sand, kitty litter, gravel or other substances that can hold moisture and cause fungus growth. Additionally, a non-particulate liner will be much easier to clean.
* Females should have a large bin or pot with plain soil or a mixture of sand and soil so that a nesting area is always available. Developing eggs and becoming egg bound is a very common problem of captive chameleons, especially veileds.

**Veterinary & Preventive Care**

We recommend a physical examination every 6-12 months, where a vet can perform a fecal examination for parasites and order a blood test if necessary. Chameleons are fragile animals.

Some common diseases and ailments to be on the lookout for include infections, calcium and Vitamin A deficiency, bone fractures, organ failure, and egg binding (in females). Be on the lookout for changes in diet and mood. These could be a sign of a more serious problem. Any time a chameleon is weak, lethargic, or not eating contact your vet right away.