

# Veiled Chameleon

*Chamaeleo calyptrotus*



The veiled chameleon is being bred in captivity. It is considered the hardiest of the chameleons and better suited to being a pet. It is indigenous to coastal regions of Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Veiled chameleons have prehensile tails frequently kept curled into a coil. They have long whip-like tongues, independently moving eyes, zygodactyl feet, and continuously changing skin colors reflecting environmental camouflage or stage of the reproductive cycle. Veileds have a high casque on the head, with the males' being much larger. The function of the casque is debated: amplification of low frequency "buzzing" sounds for communication, dissipation of heat, or for collection/channeling of water.

Generally chameleons should be housed individually unless a breeding colony is established. Any new chameleon should be quarantined in a separate area of the home for at least 30 days, and checked by a veterinarian prior to exposure to any resident reptiles.

## Diet

"Salad": dark leafy greens (chard, mustard greens, kale, dandelion, parsley, top of carrot, etc) chopped and mixed crumbled Insectivore Fare plus Calcium (USP: carbonate, citrate or gluconate), 10 mg per salad. Do not use calciums that contain vitamin D unless directed by your veterinarian. Edible green plants can be used in the habitat such as shefflera, ficus, hibiscus, vine maple, etc. The insect portion of the diet can consist of commercially-raised crickets, silkworms, roaches, superworms (*Zophobas*), waxworms, mealworms, and other live insects. These should be fed the "salad" listed above for at least 24-48 hrs before they are offered to the chameleon. Larval insects like mealworms and waxworms contain very little calcium and should only be offered in limited quantities and rarely. Chameleons can be taught to eat in a deep container to reduce insect dispersal throughout the habitat. Roaming insects may chew on the chameleons, and it is best not to leave a lot of uneaten prey in the habitat: remove it in the evening and offer the next day.

## Water

Free-ranging chameleons drink the dew and raindrops from leaves and wet surfaces. In captivity, they generally will not drink from a bowl. Their enclosure should be fitted with a drip system that can range from simple drip cups with melting ice cubes to automatic drip line systems. The enclosure should be misted 1-2X daily so they can drink off wet surfaces. Chameleons not watered regularly may become dehydrated which can lead to severe illness.

## Housing and Light

Caging should include vertical and branched climbing with foliage. Branches such as cleaned vine maple, willow, apple; ficus tall plants, shefflera or hibiscus can be used. A basking branch should be positioned for optimal uVB exposure. Newspaper is fine for substrate. If live plants are used, screening should be cut to cover the dirt.

- **Light** – on timer: 13 hrs on, 11 off; uVB available (recommend MegaRay® bulbs non-desert or low wattage, [www.reptileuv.com](http://www.reptileuv.com), checked by meter with measurement of optimal distance for basking branch, be sure can get out of direct light to protect eyes.)
- **Basking Temperatures:** 95-105°F on 13 hrs
- **Ambient (cage) Temperature:** Day-82-85°F; Night: 70-75°F
- **Humidity:** 100% when misted; night time drops to 40-60%. Mist 1-2X daily dependent on size of habitat, ventilation and type of furnishings.
- **Heat:** Supply with heat emitters or room heaters. Do not use hot rocks, furnishings or elements that attach to the glass: direct contact with these may burn the chameleon.

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