



# Chameleon

## *Chamaeleonidae* Care Sheet

**Caging needed:** Chameleons do best in screen-sided enclosures because of the increased airflow. Glass aquariums, on the other hand, are difficult to find in the appropriate sizes, and they create stagnant air that can lead to upper-respiratory infections in veiled chameleons. For adult veiled chameleons, bigger is better as far as their enclosures are concerned. The ideal cage for an adult male veiled chameleon would be a screened enclosure measuring about 2 feet wide by 2 feet long by 4 feet tall. Females can be kept in screened enclosures measuring about 18 inches long by 18 inches deep and 3 feet tall. Inside the cage needs to be filled with plants (live or artificial) and vines or branches for climbing.

**Substrate:** A reptile carpet can be used in at the bottom of the cage. Coconut husky or repti bark can also be used, but be cautious when using loose material as a substrate. Chameleons are known for ingesting their substrate.

**Diet:** Veiled chameleons can be fed a staple diet of crickets that are as long as your chameleon's head is wide. Baby and juvenile veiled chameleons should be fed once or twice a day, with almost constant access to food. As they get older, you can feed them slightly less often. Adults can be fed every other day. It is important to supplement your crickets with calcium and vitamins to help promote your veiled chameleon's proper growth and health. To make crickets more nutritious, which will ultimately benefit your veiled chameleon, gut-load them with nutritious foods such as collard greens, mustard greens, squash, orange and/or commercial cricket diets.

**Temperature and Humidity:** Veiled chameleons need two forms of light for approximately 12 hours a day. First, they need a light that will serve as a heat source, so they can bask and regulate their body temperature. Heat rocks, heat tape, ceramic heat emitters and other similar heating devices will not provide veiled chameleons with a heat source they will recognize, so it is important to provide them with a basking spot using a heat bulb and an incandescent fixture. They also need lighting that will provide UVB, to ensure proper calcium absorption and avoid conditions such as metabolic bone disease (MBD). This can be provided by natural sunlight for chameleons kept outdoors. For indoor chameleons, use a full-spectrum fluorescent tube. Keep in mind that UVB rays are filtered out by glass, so place the full-spectrum light on top of the screen top of the enclosure, with the closest perches positioned approximately 6 to 8 inches beneath it. Follow manufacturer recommendations when it comes to replacing these bulbs, as even though they still emit light, their UVB can wear out over time. Veiled chameleons, like other reptiles, regulate their own body temperature and it is important to provide them with a temperature gradient inside their enclosures. The best ambient temperature for veiled chameleons during the day is room temperature, between 72 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. By placing the heat bulb approximately 6 to 8 inches above a perch inside the enclosure, a basking spot of approximately 85 to 95 degrees should be achieved. Veiled chameleons do well with a nighttime temperature drop, so no additional heat source is needed at night as long as the enclosure temps are above the mid to high 40s and the chameleons are able to bask beneath the heat bulb in the morning.

**Misc:** Chameleons do not recognize water bowls. You will need to provide your chameleon with a dripper and mist the cage twice a day.

**Average size:** 2 inches

**Average lifespan:** 6-8 years

