

PANTHER CHAMELEON CARE GUIDE

Because Your Tree-Dwelling Mood Ring Has Opinions

Bay Area Bird & Exotics Hospital

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Panther Chameleons are best admired, not cuddled. They are brilliant, solitary, and have very strong feelings about personal space. Respect that and you'll get along fine.



MEET YOUR PANTHER CHAMELEON

Fact	Detail
Scientific name	Furcifer pardalis
Native range	Northeastern & coastal Madagascar, humid lowland forests
Size	Males 14–20"; females 10–14"
Lifespan	Males 5–7 years; females 3–4 years
Temperament	Territorial, solitary, highly opinionated



HOUSING YOUR TINY ARBOREAL OVERLORD

- Panther Chameleons are vertical thinkers — height matters more than floor space
- Enclosure type: **screened only**. Glass traps heat and humidity and will make your chameleon miserable.
- Bigger is always better if you have room — don't let anyone tell you otherwise

Dragon	Minimum Enclosure Size
Adult male	24" x 24" x 48" (60 x 60 x 120 cm)
Adult female	18" x 18" x 36" (45 x 45 x 90 cm)

- Décor: sturdy branches, vines, and live or artificial plants (pothos, ficus, hibiscus all work well)
- Dense foliage for hiding + open basking spots — chameleons need both security and a good tan
- Substrate: paper towel or clean paper. Simple, clean, non-ingestible.
- Avoid loose substrates like sand or bark — if they eat it, you'll regret it



LIGHTING & TEMPERATURE

- UVB: linear **T5 5.0 or 6%** bulb, covering most of the enclosure
- Replace UVB bulb **every 10–12 months or at manufacturer's recommendation** — output fades before the light does

- Lighting schedule: **12 hours on, 12 hours off** — no exceptions, no all-nighters
- Avoid multi-bulb, high-intensity setups — overheating makes for a grumpy, sick chameleon

Zone	Temperature
Basking spot (top perch)	88–92°F
Ambient (middle)	75–82°F
Cool zone (bottom)	70–75°F
Nighttime	65–72°F (a slight drop = happy chameleon)

HUMIDITY & HYDRATION

- Maintain humidity at **50–80%** — it will spike after misting, which is exactly the point. Monitor with a **digital hygrometer** — guessing humidity doesn't count.
- Mist **2–3 times daily**, morning and evening at minimum
- Automated misting systems are ideal — they're consistent and don't forget. Remember to clean your humidifiers and/or drip systems weekly to prevent the build-up of bacteria and molds
- Your chameleon drinks water off leaves, not from a bowl. No bowl required.
- Avoid standing water from excessive misting or drip systems — stagnant water causes respiratory problems

DIET: BUGS, BUGS, AND MORE BUGS

- Panther Chameleons are insectivores with very refined taste — variety is non-negotiable

Staple Feeders	Occasional Treats
Dubia roaches	Waxworms
Black soldier fly larvae	Superworms
Silkworms	
Hornworms	
Crickets	
Earthworms, locusts	

- Gut-load all insects 24–48 hours before feeding — the bugs need to eat well so your chameleon eats well (see our Gut Loading Handout)
- Remove uneaten insects after a few hours — loose feeders stress your chameleon out

Age	Frequency	Amount
Juvenile	Daily	As many as they'll eat
Adult	Every other day	6–8 appropriately sized insects

SUPPLEMENTS

- **Calcium without D3:** lightly dust insects at most feedings
- Multivitamin: every other week — must contain Vitamin A as **retinol**, **NOT beta-carotene**. This matters.
- Light dusting only — over-supplementation causes its own problems. A little goes a long way.

BEHAVIOR & HANDLING

- Solitary and territorial — never house two chameleons together, even if they seem fine
- Visual stress is real: even seeing another chameleon through the glass can freak them out
- Handle minimally — most chameleons strongly prefer being observed to being touched
- Stress signs to watch for: color dulling, refusal to eat, lethargy, and general dramatic behavior
- Color changes signal mood, temperature, and health — not just camouflage. Learn to read them.

HEALTH & COMMON CONCERNS

Condition	Signs to Watch For
Dehydration	Sunken eyes, loose or wrinkled skin
Metabolic Bone Disease	Swelling, soft jaw, poor grip — caused by poor UVB or calcium
Respiratory infection	Wheezing, gaping mouth — caused by stagnant air or low temps
Parasites	Weight loss, loose stools — from wild or untreated feeder insects
Stress-related illness	Color changes, not eating — from overhandling or bad environment

Call us immediately if you notice gaping mouth, wheezing, lethargy, poor grip, or any sudden change in behavior or appearance. Don't wait to see if it resolves on its own.

QUICK CARE SUMMARY

- Tall, well-ventilated screened enclosure — **males 24x24x48"**, **females 18x18x36"**
- Strong T5 UVB lighting, 12h on / 12h off, replaced every 10–12 months
- Mist 2–3x daily — they drink from leaves, not bowls
- Varied, gut-loaded insect diet with calcium and retinol-based multivitamin
- Minimal handling, zero cohabitation, maximum admiration

Questions? We've heard weirder ones. Call us.

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