

CAL ZOO'S REFERENCE SHEET

JACKSON'S CHAMELEON

Latin name	Chameleo jacksonii	Maximum length	9 - 13 inches
Native to	Kenya. Have been introduced to Hawaii	Approximate life span	Up to 10 years

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Jackson's chameleon is one of the most prehistoric-looking reptiles. This probably accounts for its popularity, giving everyone the chance to own a dinosaur. As with all true chameleons, the Jackson's chameleon has some very interesting characteristics. Most apparent of these is the ability for them to be able to look in two directions at one time. Their brain is able to discern the separate images and keep them straight. Other traits include; catching prey with their long, sticky tongue; the ability to change color depending on mood and temperature; and their unique "fused" fingers that enable them to gain a strong hold on branches (and fingers!). Male Jackson's chameleons have three horns on the front of their heads (not to be confused with Johnston's chameleons which are somewhat smaller and lay eggs, rather than give live birth as the Jackson's chameleons). Female Jackson's chameleons look just like the males except they have no horns.

ENCLOSURE

It is best to house chameleons alone or in sexed pairs. Use a tall 15 gallon enclosure that is well ventilated for one pair. Increase enclosure size by 15 gallons for each pair added. The larger the enclosure, the better. Decorate with live and/or silk plants and sturdy, secure branches for climbing and basking. Be sure most of the branches are horizontal in the upper half of the enclosure and there is one "basking branch" near the extreme top under a basking bulb.

SUBSTRATE

Since Jackson's chameleons spend the majority of their time on the branches, the type of substrate is not extremely important. Zoo Med CAGE CARPET or Astroturf™ may be used, or for a more natural look, use Zoo Med REPTI BARK™. Zoo Med REPTI BARK™ will, when damp, help keep the humidity level high, which is a plus.

TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Jackson's chameleons come from a high altitude, so the enclosure should be cool and damp, about 70 - 80°F. Humidity level 50 - 70%. In dry climates, use an airstone in the water bowl to increase humidity levels. Any temperature over this or humidity level too low will be detrimental to your chameleons.

HEATING

Unless you live in a particularly cold area, no heat source will be needed other than a 50 or 75 watt Zoo Med REPTI™ BASKING SPOT BULB. If your chameleon shows signs of over heating (gaping mouth or overall light yellow color) move it at once to a cooler area. In an emergency, use a spray bottle with room temperature water to cool down the chameleon. Always use a thermometer and humidity gauge in all reptile & amphibian enclosures.

LIGHTING

Since Jackson's chameleons enjoy basking in natural sunlight, UVA/UVB lighting should be provided. The best source is the Zoo Med REPTISUN™ fluorescent bulb. Place the bulb closest to the chameleon's basking area. These bulbs work most efficiently when unobstructed. UVB light is filtered greatly by glass and somewhat by screen. UVB fluorescent lights should be replaced every 6 months to a year. The UV levels decline over time regardless of whether or not the bulb is still providing light. All reptiles and amphibians need a photo period. A plug in timer (for your lights only, do not use a timer for your heating devices) works well to develop a regular photo period (light cycle) of 8 - 10 hours of light, 14 - 16 hours of dark. Reptiles and amphibians cannot see the red light spectrum, so a low wattage red bulb is ideal for nighttime viewing. If weather permits, place your chameleon outside for natural sunlight. Do not use a glass or acrylic aquarium, you will cook your chameleon. Wire cages such as bird cages work best. Be sure you provide a shady area for your chameleon to retreat to as the temperature in direct sunlight may rise to an undesirable level.

FOOD & WATER

Jackson's chameleons are insectivorous lizards, that is they eat insects. Commercially bred crickets, cockroaches, wax worms, flies and king mealworms are the best choices. Lightly dust the food items with Zoo Med REPTIVITE® vitamins with each feeding. Feeding should take place every other day. Vary the diet constantly. Jackson's chameleons will get tired of eating the same thing day after day. If you use a wire cage to house your chameleons, hang a coffee can from the top so that it hangs just below the basking branches. This will allow you to feed crickets to your chameleons without letting them escape from the enclosure. Water should be provided by means of a drip watering system. The reservoir should be placed above the enclosure with the drip traveling down some plants into a catch basin. Since chameleons live in the trees, they are accustomed to licking moisture from leaves, not from pools.

NOTES

Jackson's chameleons, as with most chameleons, do not care to be handled excessively. It's best to enjoy watching them in their environment. They are more stress-prone than most other reptiles. Always wash your hands before and immediately after handling reptiles and amphibians. Never leave live food long term with reptiles & amphibians. They can inflict severe harm, even kill your pet. If your animals take some time to eat or you feed them at night, leave a slice of potato, carrot or dry dog food for the live food items to eat. Your local pet shop is an ideal source for reptile and

amphibian related books and supplies. Please make sure you read and become familiar with any instructions provided with reptile support products you may purchase. . For further information on reptiles and amphibians we recommend you read *REPTILES MAGAZINE* and *THE VIVARIUM*. California Zoological Supply hopes you have enjoyed reading this reference sheet on Jackson's Chameleons. We hope that our guidelines will assist you with the care or possible purchase of your new pet.

This sheet may be copied in its entirety only.