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CHAMELEONS

Common Chameleon

Chamaeleo chamaeleon

Chamaeleo chamaeleon is a medium-sized, tree-dwelling chameleon from the Mediterranean coast and the Middle East. It is the only chameleon that lives naturally in Europe. It is green to olive-brown with two pale longitudinal bands along the sides. The species is short-lived, and little is known about keeping it in captivity. It needs a tall mesh enclosure with UVB and low night temperatures and must live alone.

Family: Chamaeleonidae Former name: *Chamaeleo parisiensium; Chamaeleo saharicus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**20-30 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**17-56 g**
Lifespan	**1-4 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and savanna**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 45 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-30 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
Water	**No water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**12 months**
Clutch size	**14-50 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**240-360 days** at 26 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about the care of *Chamaeleo chamaeleon*, and it is rarely kept.
TEMPERATURE	The species comes from a climate with warm days and cool nights. During the day the temperature in the enclosure should be 25-30 °C, and on a basking branch it should be 32-35 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be 40-60 %, and the enclosure should dry out completely between waterings, because the species comes from a dry summer climate.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and needs strong light for 12 hours and darkness for 12 hours. UVB is necessary, because the animal makes D3 in its skin and needs it to absorb calcium.
FEEDING	The species is insectivorous and needs live insects: crickets, grasshoppers, silkworms, hornworms and roaches such as *Blaptica dubia*. In the wild the diet consists of flying and crawling insects, so variety is important.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Chamaeleo chamaeleon* is an animal to look at and not to handle. The species sits still and lies in wait for prey. Handling stresses it, and stress shows as dark colour, an open mouth and an inflated body.
NATIVE RANGE	Morocco, Western Sahara, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Spain, Portugal and Greece.