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CHAMELEONS

Meller's Chameleon

Trioceros melleri

Trioceros melleri is the largest chameleon on the African mainland. It grows up to 60 cm long, carries a single small horn on its snout and lives in bushy savannas and open woodland in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. The species needs a great deal of space, plenty of water and cool, humid nights, and belongs only with an experienced keeper.

Family: Chamaeleonidae Former name: *Chamaeleo melleri; Ensirostris melleri*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**30-60 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**300-500 g**
Lifespan	**5-14 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Savanna and dry forest**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 90 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**22-28 °C**
Basking spot	**29-32 °C**
Temperature, night	**15-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-100%**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**15-80 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1**
Incubation	**180-270 days** at 24-26 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
An adult needs an enclosure of at least 120 × 90 × 150 cm (length × width × height), and bigger is better. The species grows large and heavy, and a whole room or a large aviary is not too much.

TEMPERATURE
The daytime temperature in the enclosure should be 22-28 °C, and 29-32 °C at the basking spot under the lamp. Animals from coastal Tanzania do best at the warm end of the range. At night the temperature should drop to 15-20 °C.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
Humidity should follow the daily cycle: 40-50 % by day and over 90 % at night. Constant humidity causes respiratory infections and fungal problems, so all surfaces must dry out during the day.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species is diurnal and needs strong light for 12 hours a day. Use a T5 HO UVB tube in a single reflector along the length of the enclosure, and supplement with full-spectrum or plant lighting so that the plants thrive.

FEEDING
T. melleri is insectivorous. Offer varied, large feeder insects: crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches, silkworm pupae, stick insects and black soldier fly larvae.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
The species is kept singly for life. Males are strongly territorial, and even a pair in a large enclosure causes problems; two animals are brought together only briefly for mating.

NATIVE RANGE
Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania.