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MONITOR LIZARDS

Bengal Monitor

Varanus bengalensis

Varanus bengalensis is a terrestrial monitor lizard from India and much of South Asia, one of the most widespread monitors of all, ranging from Iran to Myanmar. It grows up to 175 cm long, is diurnal and digs burrows. The species is rare in captivity and there is almost no reliable husbandry experience, so this guide is based on other large terrestrial monitors and on the species' way of life in the wild.

Family: Varanidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**100-175 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-22 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert, savanna and dry forest**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**375 × 150 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-38 °C**
Basking spot	**50-55 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-25 °C**
Humidity	**60-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**30-36 months**
Clutch size	**20 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**168-254 days** at 28-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix I**
EU annex	**Annex A**
IUCN	**Near Threatened (NT)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about keeping *Varanus bengalensis*.
TEMPERATURE	There must be a large temperature gradient. The air is kept at 24-38 °C from the cool to the warm end. The surface temperature of the basking spot, measured with an IR thermometer, should be 50-55 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species lives in both dry and humid regions. Humidity should be 60-70 % in the middle of the enclosure.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	*Varanus bengalensis* swims well, and a large water container is part of the set-up. Use a container in which the whole animal can lie, such as a concrete mixing tub or a large basin for large animals.
LIGHTING AND UVB	Keep the light on for about 12 hours a day. UVB is recommended for animals that do not get unfiltered sunlight, because the skin produces vitamin D3 under UVB.
FEEDING	*Varanus bengalensis* is a purely carnivorous predator and a generalist with about 200 known prey species.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	In the wild *Varanus bengalensis* is shy and avoids people. The animal has sharp eyesight and notices movement at a distance of about 250 m. When caught, only a few bite, and it is rare.
NATIVE RANGE	Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Burma).