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MONITOR LIZARDS

Short-tailed Pygmy Monitor

Varanus brevicauda

Varanus brevicauda is one of the smallest monitors in the world: a brownish, ground-dwelling and diurnal desert dweller from the interior of Australia that reaches only 20-25 cm in length and lives in burrows under spinifex grass. It is rarely kept or bred, and much of its care has to be borrowed from relatives, so the species is only for experienced keepers who are prepared to break new ground.

Family: Varanidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**20-25 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**8-20 g**
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**80 × 40 × 50 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**28-30 °C**
Basking spot	**38-45 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-20 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**10-22 months**
Clutch size	**1-5 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-3**
Incubation	**70-100 days** at 29-30 °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 80 × 40 × 50 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better.
TEMPERATURE	The species is diurnal and loves heat. The rest of the enclosure is kept at 28-30 °C by day, and the basking spot should reach 38-45 °C measured as surface temperature with an IR thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	*Varanus brevicauda* comes from dry regions and needs low humidity of 30-50 %. Keep the floor dry at the top, but let one deep corner be slightly moist, so the animal can retreat into moisture when it wants.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Varanus brevicauda* is diurnal and lives in open country with strong sunlight. The species basks and needs UVB corresponding to Ferguson zone 3, like other diurnal monitors that bask.
FEEDING	In the wild *Varanus brevicauda* eats insects, spiders, scorpions, centipedes and other invertebrates, and also takes small lizards such as skinks and geckos, reptile eggs and occasionally frogs and small snakes.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus brevicauda* is small, but it has the temperament of a real monitor. It hisses, puffs out its throat and lunges if it feels threatened.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.