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MONITOR LIZARDS

Pygmy Mulga Monitor

Varanus gilleni

A small, slender and diurnal tree climber from the interior desert regions of Australia. *Varanus gilleni* grows to only 35-40 cm and is one of the least demanding monitors, but it needs a very hot basking spot, a tall enclosure and a fixed rhythm with a cool winter.

Family: Varanidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**35-40 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**60-80 g**
Lifespan	**8-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 60 × 90 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**26-30 °C**
Basking spot	**40-60 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-20 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**18-22 °C** 6-10 weeks
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or one male with several females**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-7 eggs**
Incubation	**84-131 days** at 26-32 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	For an adult pair the enclosure must be at least 60 × 60 × 90 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better. Height is important, because the species climbs.
TEMPERATURE	*Varanus gilleni* needs a very hot basking spot. The surface temperature of the branch under the heat source must be 40-60 °C, preferably 50-60 °C, measured with an IR thermometer.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from dry regions and does not need high humidity. Keep humidity at 40-60 %, with a dry enclosure as the starting point and a damper corner or deep substrate where the animal can retreat.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and basks in high heat.
FEEDING	*Varanus gilleni* eats mostly small arthropods: crickets, grasshoppers, cockroaches, mealworms, spiders and other insects. In the wild it also takes small lizards, especially geckos, and sometimes birds' eggs.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus gilleni* is among the calmest monitors. It is far less fast and quick-tempered than, for example, *V. acanthurus* and *V. tristis*. It seldom bites, and even animals that are a little skittish at first soon settle down.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.