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MONITOR LIZARDS

Desert Monitor

Varanus griseus

Varanus griseus is a slender, greyish-brown desert monitor found from North Africa through the Middle East to Pakistan and north-western India. It grows to about 1 m long and has narrow, dark bands on the back and tail. It digs, basks a great deal and feeds on small mammals, eggs, reptiles and insects. Little is known about its care, and the species rarely does well in captivity.

Family: Varanidae

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-180 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-17 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Expert**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**300 × 120 × 120 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**25-35 °C**
Basking spot	**50-58 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**30-60%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**12-18 °C** 13-22 weeks
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**7-20 eggs**
Incubation	**120 days** at 29-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about the care of *Varanus griseus*, and the species rarely does well in captivity.
TEMPERATURE	*Varanus griseus* comes from deserts with very hot summers and cold winters and needs a large temperature gradient. In the wild its body temperature rarely exceeds 38.5 °C, even when basking.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The air in the enclosure must be dry: 30-60 % (borrowed from *Varanus gouldii*).
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Varanus griseus* is active by day and basks a great deal, so it needs strong light and UVB corresponding to Ferguson zone 3.
FEEDING	In the wild *Varanus griseus* eats mainly mice, eggs and fish, but also other small mammals (gerbils, young hares), reptiles, birds, toads, insects, snails, centipedes, scorpions and carrion. The young feed mostly on arthropods.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus griseus* is shy and fast and remains wild. It never becomes tame or accustomed to handling, and an animal that is frightened and cold stands its ground and becomes very aggressive.
NATIVE RANGE	Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Mali, Sudan, Israel, Palestinian Territories, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India.