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MONITOR LIZARDS

Northern Blunt-spined Monitor

Varanus primordius

A small, diurnal ground monitor from the tropical northern part of the Northern Territory in Australia. *Varanus primordius* digs and basks in intense heat and lives on insects, small reptiles and their eggs. The species is rare in captivity, and there are few reliable care figures, so it is only for the experienced keeper.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus acanthurus primordius; Worrellisaurus primordius*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**30-46 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Rock-dwelling, terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Savanna and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-38 °C**
Basking spot	**55-65 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-26 °C**
Humidity	**20-50%**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**8-14 months**
Clutch size	**2-5 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-5**
Incubation	**80-120 days** at 28.5-30.5 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	*Varanus primordius* is a small but very active ground-dwelling monitor. An adult needs at least 120 × 60 × 60 cm (length × width × height), preferably larger, and a home-built terrarium with front doors is often best.
TEMPERATURE	*V. primordius* is a sun-seeking animal and needs a lot of heat. Measure the surface temperature of the basking spot with an IR thermometer, not the air. The basking spot must have a surface temperature of 55-65 °C.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The air must be dry, 20-50 % relative humidity. More important than the air is the humidity of the substrate.
LIGHTING AND UVB	Diurnal, sun-seeking monitors need strong UVB light. Use a powerful UVB tube or a metal halide lamp in a reflector fitting, mounted at a safe distance from the basking spot, and count on Ferguson zone 3.
FEEDING	In the wild *Varanus primordius* lives on insects, small reptiles and reptile eggs.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*V. primordius* is small, so bites and claws are seldom serious, but small monitors can still cause scratches that bleed. Always keep a high level of hygiene and wash hands after touching, because monitors can carry salmonella.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.