herpy

MONITOR LIZARDS

Spencer's Monitor

Varanus spenceri

Varanus spenceri is a heavily built, ground-dwelling monitor of up to 120 cm that lives on the treeless black-soil plains of north-eastern Australia and shelters in cracks and burrows in the ground. It eats almost anything it can overpower and plays dead when threatened. The species is extremely rare outside Australia, and little is known about its care.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus ingrami*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**100-120 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and savanna**
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	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**11-30 eggs**
Incubation	**180-190 days** at 27-29 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about the care of *Varanus spenceri*, because the species is hardly kept outside zoological gardens.
TEMPERATURE	Monitors are diurnal, and *Varanus spenceri* needs a large temperature gradient: a warm basking spot and cooler zones where the animal can withdraw.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species comes from dry plains, so humidity in the enclosure should be low: 30-60 %, with good ventilation. The figures are borrowed from *Varanus gouldii*.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Varanus spenceri* is diurnal and lives in open landscape without shade, where it basks a great deal.
FEEDING	In the wild the species eats almost anything it can overpower: snakes, small mammals, small lizards, eggs and carrion. In captivity the diet should be varied and consist of whole prey.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	Safety: *Varanus spenceri* is strong and has sharp claws and a powerful tail, and a bite from an animal of up to a metre can cause deep wounds. A threatened animal hisses, puffs out its throat and lashes with its tail.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.