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MONITOR LIZARDS

Pygmy Rock Monitor

Varanus kingorum

One of the world's smallest monitors: a reddish-brown, dark-spotted rock dweller from northern Australia that grows to 18-40 cm including the tail. It lives on insects, is diurnal and bold in the enclosure, and needs many narrow hides, plenty of heat and a deep, slightly damp substrate to dig in.

Family: Varanidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**18-40 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Rock-dwelling and terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**90 × 45 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**27-32 °C**
Basking spot	**45-50 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**6-10 months**
Clutch size	**2-4 eggs**
Incubation	**89-126 days** at 27-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult pair needs an enclosure of at least 90 × 45 × 45 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better. The shape is low and long, because the species lives on the ground and among stones.

TEMPERATURE

The species requires a lot of heat. Under a basking spot the surface temperature should be 45-50 °C, measured with an IR thermometer directly on the stone or bark, not in the air. This is only a small area.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The air in the enclosure can be relatively dry, about 40-60 %, but the substrate must be kept evenly damp. Add small amounts of water to the soil at regular intervals, and do not pour in water in large quantities.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and does best with strong light and UVB. Use a combination of a heat bulb and a UVB tube, for example a 10-12 % T5 tube over the warm part of the enclosure.

FEEDING

Varanus kingorum lives exclusively on insects. Fast insects such as crickets and red runner roaches are clearly preferable to slow dubia roaches and mealworms.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

V. kingorum is bold and active in the enclosure and moves around in the open during the day when it has plenty of hides. It is fast and can jump onto the hand when it sees food.

NATIVE RANGE

Australia.