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MONITOR LIZARDS

Freckled Monitor

Varanus orientalis

Varanus orientalis is a slender, fast dwarf monitor from north-eastern Australia that climbs trees and rocks and feeds on insects and small lizards. It grows to no more than 60-75 cm and is much smaller than the large monitors, but it still needs a tall, custom-built enclosure, plenty of heat and UVB light, and it lives for many years.

Family: Varanidae Former name: *Varanus tristis orientalis* Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**40-75 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and rock-dwelling**
Habitat	**Savanna and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**150 × 75 × 120 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**26-32 °C**
Basking spot	**50-60 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**14-36 months**
Clutch size	**3-17 eggs**
Clutches per year	**2-5**
Incubation	**93-137 days** at 27-29 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Not Evaluated (NE)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	For an adult *Varanus orientalis* you should plan on an enclosure of at least 150 × 75 × 120 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better.
TEMPERATURE	*Varanus orientalis* is a typical sun-loving animal and needs a large temperature gradient. Keep 26-32 °C as the background during the day and 20-24 °C at night.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The relative humidity should be 30-50 %, and the substrate should be dry to slightly damp on the surface. *Varanus orientalis* lives in dry to slightly humid areas and does not tolerate constantly wet conditions.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species is diurnal and basks, so UVB is recommended. Use a powerful T5 HO UVB tube for sun-loving species (Ferguson zone 3), covering about half the length of the enclosure over the basking spot.
FEEDING	In the wild *Varanus orientalis* feeds mostly on arthropods, lizards and eggs. The staple diet in captivity is well-fed live insects: crickets, grasshoppers, dubia roaches, silverfish, mealworms and silkworms in wide variety.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus orientalis* is alert, fast and inquisitive and can become quite trusting. Captive-bred animals get used to people relatively quickly, whereas wild-caught animals flee or hide and can take a long time to settle in.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.