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MONITOR LIZARDS

Yellow-spotted Monitor

Varanus panoptes

Varanus panoptes is a powerful, curious ground monitor from northern Australia and southern New Guinea, known for rising up on its hind legs and tail to scout. It is active, clever and greedy, digs deep burrows and grows up to 150 cm long. The species requires a home-built enclosure of several square metres, a deep substrate and an experienced keeper, and it is not an animal for handling.

Family: Varanidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**90-150 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**3,000-10,000 g**
Lifespan	**15-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Savanna and wetland**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**240 × 120 × 150 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-38 °C**
Basking spot	**46-57 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-25 °C**
Humidity	**70-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**6-13 eggs**
Incubation	**194-240 days** at 26-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Adults should not be kept in an ordinary enclosure. An adult male needs at least 240 × 120 × 150 cm (length × width × height), and a whole room is better.
TEMPERATURE	There must be a large temperature gradient. The air in the enclosure is kept at about 24-38 °C, with cooler areas down in the substrate and warmer ones towards the basking spot.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The humidity must be moderate to high. A relative humidity of 70-80 % in the middle of the enclosure is regarded as suitable.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	*Varanus panoptes* likes to bathe, and a large tub is part of the set-up. Use a container in which the whole animal can lie in the water, e.g. a cement mixing tub or a large plastic tub for large animals.
LIGHTING AND UVB	Keep the light on for about 12 hours a day.
FEEDING	*Varanus panoptes* is an omnivorous predator with a high metabolism, and it quickly learns that the keeper means food.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus panoptes* is active and curious and likes to hiss, but it is not an animal for handling. It rarely becomes calm from being picked up and should be regarded as an animal to look at.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.