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MONITOR LIZARDS

Northern Pilbara Rock Monitor

Varanus pilbarensis

A small, reddish-brown rock monitor from the Pilbara in north-western Australia, with large, pale grey eye spots on the back and a long, distinctly banded tail. *Varanus pilbarensis* grows to 45-50 cm long and is shy and diurnal. It needs a very warm basking spot, rock structure to climb and hide in, and a cool period in winter.

Family: Varanidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**45-50 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**12-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Rock-dwelling**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**26-32 °C**
Basking spot	**45-50 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-20 °C**
Humidity	**50-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Winter rest	**18 °C** 8-9 weeks
Diet	**Insects and vertebrates**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**2-9 eggs**
Incubation	**100-120 days** at 29 °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 120 × 60 × 60 cm (length × width × height), and larger is better. The species is active and roams around on the rock faces, so floor area is more important than height.

TEMPERATURE

The species needs a large temperature gradient. Measure the surface temperature with an IR thermometer: at the warmest spot, the basking spot under the lamp, stones or branches should be about 45 °C and up to 50 °C if desired.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

The humidity should be 50-70 %. It is a species from dry rocky terrain, so the enclosure should not be wet, but a damp hide must always be available, so that the animal can shed without problems.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is diurnal and spends a lot of time basking, so light and UVB are a cornerstone of care. Use fluorescent tubes or LED for ordinary daylight and a powerful spotlight over the basking spot for heat.

FEEDING

In the wild, *Varanus pilbarensis* eats insects, other invertebrates and small reptiles.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Varanus pilbarensis is shy and fast and not an animal to be handled a great deal. It can bite if grabbed, but the jaws and claws are small, and the injuries are seldom serious. The claws can, however, scratch the skin.

NATIVE RANGE

Australia.