



Panther Chameleons

Furcifer pardalis

ADVANCED · 12–20 IN ADULT · 5–7 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · MADAGASCAR

Panther chameleons are the color story of the reptile world: males from different Madagascar locales (Ambilobe, Nosy Be, Sambava) wear entirely different palettes, and captive-bred animals of known locale are the standard at NARBC tables. Care runs parallel to the veiled chameleon with two differences of emphasis: panthers are slightly more forgiving of temperature, and even less forgiving of stress.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient (day)	72–80 °F
Basking surface	85–90 °F
Night	65–70 °F
Humidity	50–70%
UVB	Required: 12% T5, Zone 3–4
Diet	Crickets, roaches, worms
Feeding cadence	Daily; adults every other day
Adult size	12–20 in
Lifespan	5–7 years



Panther chameleon. Ambilobe and Nosy Be are locale names: wild color lines, not species.

Photo: Marius Burger / iNaturalist · CC0

01

Stress is the enemy

Everything about panther husbandry bends toward one goal: an animal that feels unobserved. Sight-lines matter. Wrap three sides of the enclosure so the chameleon can't see its reflection, the room's traffic, or another chameleon. A male catching sight of a rival male, or even a female forced to see a male long-term, will stress to the point of refusing food. Handling stays at near-zero.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Tall screen enclosures with a branch highway under the basking lamp, dense mid-level foliage, and perches spaced so the animal moves through a gradient. Hybrid screen/glass builds work where homes run dry, provided airflow stays honest. Always one animal per enclosure; juveniles tolerate same-age groups only briefly.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	16×16×20	16×16×30	Like veileds, but touchier about humidity.
Juvenile	18×18×36	24×24×48	Locale-labeled captive-bred stock is the norm.
Subadult	24×24×48	24×24×48	Male color ignites as maturity arrives.
Adult	24×24×48	36×24×72	Males want the big end; females stay smaller.

Enclosure sizes in inches, L×W×H. Habitat-OS life-stage guidance.

03

Heat & UVB

Basking at 85–90 °F, a touch gentler than veileds want; ambient mid 70s, and nights down to 65–70 °F with all equipment off. The UVB prescription is identical: a linear 12% T5 tube on the screen top, highest perch 12–18 inches below it, metered to about UVI 3, bulbs replaced on schedule. Ten inches is the floor, closer burns. Daily UVB is what keeps calcium metabolism running.

04

Water & humidity

Mist to 50–70% humidity with morning and evening cycles the animal can drink from, plus a dripper running over broad leaves. Let the enclosure dry between mistings; the wet-dry rhythm suppresses the mold and bacteria that flourish in constantly soaked cages. Watch urate color as the running hydration report: white good, orange dry.

05

Planting & floor

Live pothos and ficus anchored to a vine lattice give drinking surfaces and cover; the floor stays bare or simply covered, spot-cleaned as droppings land. If a substrate is used it stays moist-not-soggy: a soaked floor in a warm cage is a mold farm, and panthers pay for it with their airways.

06

Feeding

The rotation: gut-loaded crickets and dubia as the base, hornworms and silkworms for moisture and variety. Two cautions carry extra weight in this species. Waxworms and pinky mice are gout-linked luxuries to feed sparingly or never. Vitamin over-supplementation causes edema, so dust with plain calcium most days and reserve the D3-multivitamin for a twice-monthly slot.

07

Health Red Flags

Swollen joints or lumpy limbs suggest gout, driven by rich diets and dehydration. Sunken eyes mean water debt; casque and leg softness mean the UVB-calcium system failed somewhere. A panther sitting dark, dull and low in the cage is broadcasting stress or chill. And weigh monthly: chameleons hide illness until the scale gives them away.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.