

Veiled chameleon

Chamaeleo calytratus

🇫🇷 Caméléon casqué du Yémen · 🇩🇪 Jemenchamäleon



REGULATIONS

CITES Appendix II

Import/keeping under CITES Appendix II: require proof of legal origin (CITES certificate). Subject to Swiss OPAn/TSchV: minimum husbandry standards for lizards (Annex 2, reptiles: minimum enclosure sizes, UVB, temperature and humidity gradients). A reptile keeper competence certificate is recommended; some cantons may require it. Release is prohibited; check additional cantonal rules.



LIFESPAN

5–8 years



ADULT WEIGHT

90–180 g



ADULT SIZE

35–60 cm



LIFESTYLE

Diurnal



BODY TEMPERATURE

Ectothermic



SEXUAL MATURITY

5–8 months



INCUBATION

160–220 days



LITTER / CLUTCH SIZE

20–60 eggs



Habitat & environment



Type — Vertical mesh/screen enclosure, strongly ventilated, rich in branches and foliage



Substrate — Bare floor, absorbent pad or properly drained bioactive substrate (avoid ingestion). No loose particles on the floor for females without a nest box.



Exercise — Rich vertical structure; renew branches/foliage to encourage exploration; avoid unnecessary handling (stress).



Equipment

- Many horizontal/oblique branches (diameter 1–2× the hand's width)
- Non-toxic live plants (Ficus, Schefflera, Pothos) for cover and drinking
- Hydration system: automatic misting + drip system
- Quality UVB lamp (T5 HO) + halogen basking lamp
- Thermostats/dimmers, elevated probe thermometers, hygrometer
- Nest box for females (bucket 25–30 cm deep, moist sand/soil)



Technical parameters



Hot spot

31–33 °C

Temperature on the basking perch under the lamp



Cool spot

22–25 °C

Low/shaded area



Ambient

24–28 °C

Vertical gradient; avoid ambient temperatures >30 °C



Humidity

50–70 %

Humidity cycles: peaks 80–100% during/just after misting, returning to 50–60% during the day



Lighting



Photoperiod — 11–12 h/day



UVB need — Essential



Recommended brands — X-Reptile · Reptile Expert · Solar Raptor · Arcadia



Replacement — Every 6–12 months per manufacturer



UVB does not pass through glass or plexiglass. Place the lamp inside the terrarium, under a protective grille.

💡 Metal halide lamps are the gold standard for UV: powerful UVB spectrum, far stronger than fluorescent tubes or compact bulbs, optimising vitamin D synthesis and calcium absorption. They lower the risk of metabolic bone disease; intense visible light and even heat drive activity.

Behaviour

The veiled chameleon is solitary, territorial, and highly sensitive to stress and dehydration. It needs a well-ventilated enclosure (screen type), a strong thermal and UVB gradient, high ambient humidity with drying phases, and access to water via dripping/misting rather than a bowl. Minimize handling.

 **Social life** — Solitary and territorial. Co-housing outside breeding is not recommended due to stress, anorexia, and injury risks. It needs dense foliage/branches for visual cover and retreats.

 **Activity cycle** — Diurnal. It needs a basking spot around 32–35 °C, a cool zone around 22–26 °C, nighttime 18–22 °C; high-quality UVB with target UVI ~2–3 at the basking area. Humidity 50–70% with misting morning/evening and drying between sessions. Provide daily hydration via dripper/misting and a varied insect diet with calcium and vitamin supplements (D3/UVB appropriate).

Enrichment

- Live plants, branch network of varied diameters
- Misting simulating dew/showers
- Controlled seasonal photoperiod variation
- Active prey (live insects) in secured feeding containers

Nutrition

Opportunistic insectivore. Gut-load prey for 24–48 hrs + dust with Ca/vitamins per protocol. Hydration mainly via droplets on foliage.

Daily base

Cricket

Captive-bred, kept in a Ca/P-balanced gut-loading container

Roach

Dubia: good energy density; appropriate sizes

Locust

Locust/grasshopper: chitin-rich; useful variety

Silkworm

Bombyx: highly digestible, helpful with mild stomatitis

Diptera Larvae

Black soldier fly larvae (BSF): calcium-rich; useful for variety

Vegetables & greens

Species known to occasionally consume plants (tender leaves). Offer sparingly.

Dandelion

Ca/P 5.2

Vit A

Dandelion leaves: rinse thoroughly; calcium source

Lamb's Lettuce

Ca/P 2.5

Vit A

In small amounts

Arugula

Ca/P 4

Vit A

In small amounts

Zucchini

Ca/P 0.7

In thin slices for licking water

Cucumber

Ca/P 0.5

Vit A

In thin slices for licking water

★ Treats (occasional)

Mealworms/superworms as treats only (high fat content, unfavourable Ca/P ratio).

Mealworm

Mealworm (*Tenebrio molitor*): occasional, well gut-loaded and dusted

Superworm

Zophobas/Morio: very occasional

Wingless fly

Stimulates predatory behaviour

FREQUENCY

- Juveniles (0–6 months): small prey daily (10–15/day in portions)
- Subadults (6–12 months): every other day
- Adults: 3–4 days/week; non-gravid females on moderate rations to prevent obesity and excess egg production

CALCIUM/PHOSPHORUS RATIO (CA/P)

Key indicator of a food's mineral balance, especially in reptiles: a calcium-favoured ratio supports bone and shell strength. Targets: ≥ 2 = balanced · 1–2 = in moderation · < 1 = avoid (encourages metabolic bone disease). For insects, a calcium powder at feeding time offsets an unfavourable ratio.

TO AVOID

Wild-caught prey

Pesticide/parasite risk

Processed food

Processed human foods: unsuitable



Health & prevention

Preventive medicine

Quarantine ≥60-90 days, serial faecal exams, strict UVB and gradient control, lamp replacement schedule, weight/BCS tracking, parasite screening before introduction.



Vaccination

No routine vaccinations



Surgery & neutering

Ovariosalpingectomy (dystocia, follicular stasis), foreign-body removal, dental/gingival care (stomatitis), removal of skin abscesses.



Common conditions

MBD - metabolic bone disease (secondary hypocalcaemia)

SYMPTOMS Weakness, tremors, bowed limbs, rubber jaw, pathological fractures

CAUSE UVB/D3 deficiency, insufficient dietary Ca, unfavourable Ca/P ratios

PREVENTION Stable UVI 2-3 at the perch, appropriate Ca supplements, gut-loading

Stomatitis / oral infections

SYMPTOMS Hypersalivation, caseous debris, halitosis, pain

CAUSE Microtrauma, immunosuppression, deficiencies, chronic humidity

PREVENTION Hygiene, varied insects, adequate UVB/thermoregulation

Respiratory infections

SYMPTOMS Nasal discharge, wheezing, open-mouth breathing, anorexia

CAUSE Insufficient ventilation, over-humidification without daytime drying, unsuitable temperatures

PREVENTION Mesh enclosure, humidity cycles with dry periods, temperature control



WARNING SIGNS

- Anorexia >7-10 days in juveniles or >2-3 weeks in adults
- Lethargy, prolonged low-position posture
- Drooling, stomatitis, mandibular oedema
- Open-mouth breathing, wheezing
- Dysecdysis, thermal burns, dehydration (sunken eyes)
- Caudal/abdominal distension in females, delayed laying

If any of these symptoms appear, prompt veterinary care is essential.

Contact an exotic-pet vet as soon as possible.

Parasitoses (pinworms, coccidia, Strongyloides, Cryptosporidium)

SYMPTOMS Weight loss, diarrhoea, intermittent appetite

CAUSE New arrivals, contaminated prey, poor hygiene

PREVENTION Quarantine, faecal/flotation exams, targeted treatments

Dystocia/follicular stasis in females

SYMPTOMS Lethargy, anorexia, distension, absence of laying

CAUSE No nest box, hypocalcaemia, dehydration, stress

PREVENTION Permanent nest box for sexually mature females, optimised Ca/UVB status, hydration

Thermal burns

SYMPTOMS Erythematous/blackened patches, blisters

CAUSE Direct contact with unprotected bulbs/emitters

PREVENTION Protective guards, correct distances, perch-level temperature control

Gout (hyperuricaemia/renal insufficiency)

SYMPTOMS Lethargy, joint swellings, whitish deposits

CAUSE Chronic dehydration, protein excess, nephrotoxicity

PREVENTION Hydration via misting/drippers, humidity cycles, clean water



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