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# Veiled Chameleons

*Chamaelo calytratus and others*

An Introductory Information Leaflet from

in association with

**EURO REP LIMITED**

Europe's Premier Reptile Product Company

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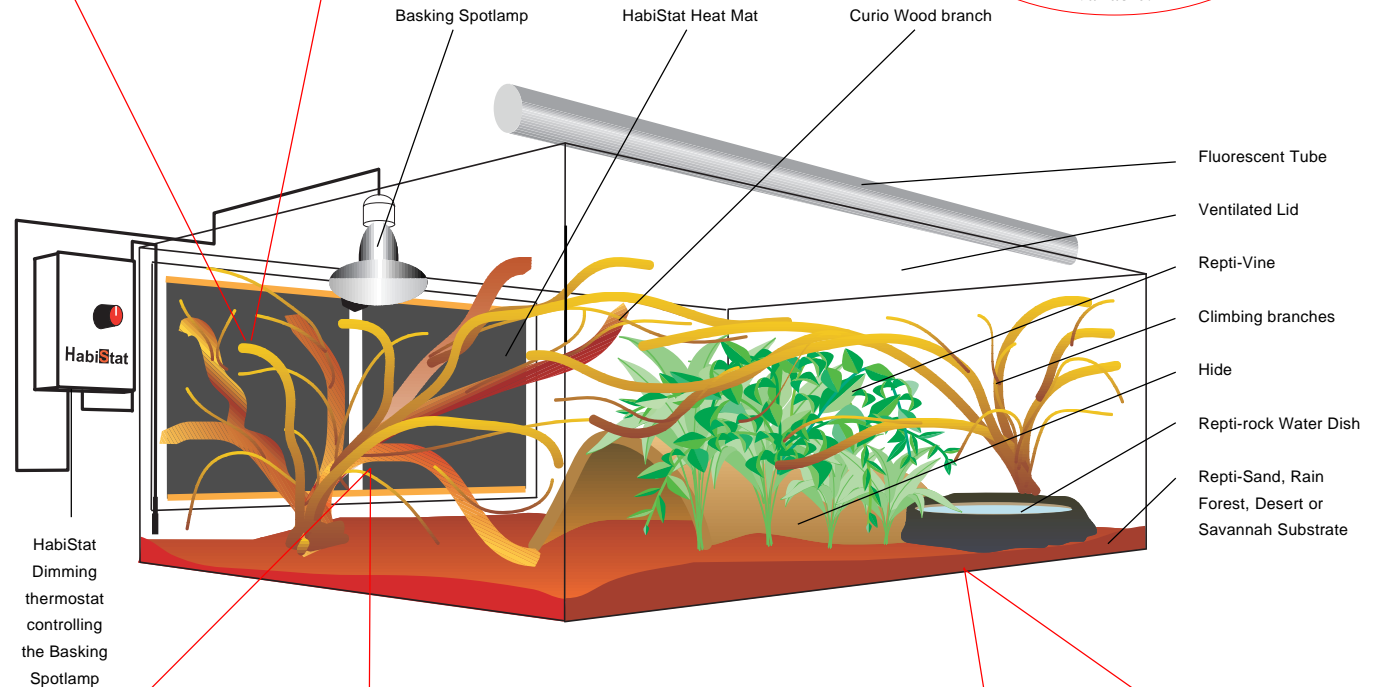
### Background Heat

Use a heat mat between half and two thirds the size of the cage to provide background heating. The hottest spot in the cage should not be above 32°C while the coolest should not be below 25°C. Use a *HabiStat Mat - Stat* if the temperature is too hot but put the whole cage in a cooler place if the temperature is not cool enough.

**Food:** Crickets, Locusts, Mealworms, and as a special treat Waxworms. Supplement livefoods by dusting insects with *Repton* or feeding *Cricket Diet Plus & Mealworm Diet Plus*. Tame individuals may also accept a commercially prepared, fresh meat reptile diet and thawed rodent pups. Water should be fresh and changed every day. A few chameleons may also eat an amount of fresh leafy salads and flowers.

### Cleanliness and Hygiene:

A routine cleaner for all non-porous surfaces could be *Vetaclene*. Anything that cannot be easily cleaned should be thrown away and replaced. Any little graze or blemish on the animals themselves would benefit from the first aid afforded by dabbing the wound with *Vetadine*. As far as human hygiene is concerned, *Vetasept Surgical Scrub* will clean hands and surfaces while *Vetasept Hand Rub* will allow adequate cleansing and disinfection even in cases when water is unavailable.



A Cage Suitable for Chameleons

### Hot Spot

A local area of higher temperature can be created with a Basking Spotlamp or a ceramic heater. Use the former in conjunction with a *HabiStat Dimming* thermostat and the latter with a *HabiStat Pulse Proportional* thermostat for precise control. Hot spots should be maintained for the same day length as the lights, sixteen hours in summer, eight in winter.

**Cage Decor:** *Repti-Sand, Desert, Savannah or Rain Forest Substrates*, all used as a dry cage base. These will blot up and 'clump' any fouling by the lizards. Clumps of waste can then be removed without cleaning the whole tank out. Climbing branches, *Cork Bark Logs* or *Curio Wood* could be used to make an interesting three dimensional display. *Flake Rain Forest Substrate* scattered over the surface makes for an attractive display and acts as an activity medium in which the lizards can hunt. Draping *Repti-Vines* in the cage will provide refuges the lizards can hide in or move through to loosen shedding skin. *Repti-rock* caves and water dishes would lend even more functionality and security.

### Cage Set Up

The cage should be set up to allow an active lizard plenty of scope to climb, bask in a hot spot, move to a cooler spot, drink and hunt for food. The lizards should also be able to secrete themselves into refuges and rub themselves against something when shedding their skin.

## Shopping List

### Minimum for a juvenile lizard:

- **Vivaria**
- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** 6x11/7w
- **Basking Spot Lamp**
- **HabiStat Dimming Thermostats**
- **Reptile D<sub>3</sub> Lights** 18"/15w
- **Arcadia Control Units** 15w,
- **Thermometer, Alcohol**
- **Repti-rock Dish & Hide**
- **Repti-Sand**
- **Repton**

Other items that may be purchased include those in the following list. Not all are required and several alternatives are suggested.

- **HabiStat, Heat Mats** (6x11/7w, 11x11/12w, 17x11/20w, 23x11/28w, 29x11/35w, 35x11/42w & 49x11/55w) & **Strips** (17x6/10w, 23x6/15w, 35x6/22w & 47x6/30w)
- **Dinosaur Fossil Hot Rocks**
- **Ceramics Bulb Heaters** (60w, 100w, 150w, 250w, Reflectors & Holders)
- **Thermometers** (Alcohol, dial, minimum - maximum & electronic digital)
- **Hygrometers** (Dial & electronic digital)
- **HabiStat Thermostats & Accessories** (Mat-Stat 100w, Temperature Thermostat 300w, Twin Channel Thermostat 2x300w, Dimming Thermostat 600w, Pulse Proportional Thermostat 600w, both the last two models are available with a night time temperature drop facility.)
- **Sun, Moon & Sun & Moon Switches, Night Eye, Cool Control Thermostats and MiniFans.**
- **Repti-rock Dishes Hides & Caves**
- **Repti-Vines**
- **Repti-Sand**
- **Desert Substrate**
- **Rain Forest Substrate**
- **Savannah Substrate**
- **Cork Bark**
- **Curio Wood**
- **Malaysian Bog Wood**
- **WoodVine**
- **Reptile D<sub>3</sub> Lights** (18"/15w & 24"/20w)
- **Blacklights** (18"/15w & 24"/20w)
- **Activa Professional Lights** (18"/15w & 24"/18w)
- **Arcadia Control Units** (15w, 2x15w, 18w, 2x18w, 20w & 2x20w)
- **Frozen Mouse 'Pinkies'**
- **Frozen Prepared Lizard Diet**
- **Crickets** &/or **Locusts** &/or **Mealworms**
- **Waxworms**
- **Repton**
- **Mealworm Diet Plus**
- **Cricket Diet Plus**
- **Reptasol**
- **ProBalance**
- **Vetaclean**
- **Vetadine**
- **Vetasept Surgical Scrub**
- **Vetasept Hand Rub**
- **Books & Leaflets**

### Chameleons...

#### ...Biology

Chameleons are lizards which are in turn, reptiles. These are mainly medium sized lizards that come from the Old World. The tail is about half the total length. They are often attractively coloured with the well known ability to change colour and pattern. This is not an inexhaustible ability, so only a certain number of possibilities exist. Many of the animals offered as pets will be captive bred and are usually sold as juveniles.

#### ...Housing

Chameleons are best housed in as large a cage as possible. Because of their rapid rate of growth and the heating and lighting equipment they need, purpose made vivaria are probably the most appropriate. The types with sliding glass doors to the front being especially resistant to escape. Another often used cage is a converted aquarium. A special adapting lid is used to contain the reptiles and attach the heating and lighting equipment that may be used.

As a guide, the cage recommended should be a minimum 60 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm for a single specimen. Of course, the cage could be larger as this would allow the animal room to grow and make it easier for the owner to manage the environment. The cage should be set up in a manner similar to the diagram over leaf. It will be necessary to provide a local hot spot near 32°C while the coolest part of the cage should be below 25°C. The hot spot can easily be arranged by installing a *Basking Spot Lamp*. To ensure the cage does not overheat, the lamp is best controlled with a *HabiStat Dimming Thermostat*. White and UV light, from a lamp like a *Reptile D<sub>3</sub>* tube, will be needed and should be present for a similar period as the hot spot; about sixteen hours per day in summer dropping to eight in winter.

Much of the success achieved in keeping Chameleons will come from the skilful manipulation of ventilation. The lizards require a fairly low humidity and cannot stand stagnant air conditions. Fresh air moving into the cage is essential. Use the upward draughts caused by heated air rising to flush out the cage and drag fresh air in. The air and excess heat can pass through ventilation in the lid, whilst fresh air is drawn in at a lower level. A more sophisticated solution would be to use a *HabiStat MiniFan*.

#### ...Husbandry

Chameleons are best kept singly. Males will tend to fight as they reach maturity and all chameleons seem to dislike the presence or even the sight of another of the same or similar species. In any case, there should be plenty of retreats and visual screens. If they are kept in groups, as juveniles or some females with a male, for example, watch out for bullying.

These lizards soon become quite tame but do not really like being handled. The lizards will fret if held and try to escape. So, only handle the lizard if absolutely necessary and just allow the animal to sit on the hand, perhaps grasping the fingers.

In time the cage will begin to look scruffy as faeces and debris builds up. As everything recommended for the cage is washable or disposable, a good clean out is easily done. Eight to ten weeks would be about as long as the cage could be left before being completely cleaned. The cage set up advised in this leaflet is practicable and can be made to look pleasing to the eye. If a more natural set up is envisaged, it may be best to wait until some experience is

gained. In any case, some of the very informative books on Lizards in general and Chameleons in particular could be investigated.

#### ...Food & Feeding

Insects like crickets and locusts form the staple diet in captivity. Mealworms can also be fed. Both crickets and mealworms should be dusted with *Repton*. Alternatively, the insect food can be fed *Cricket Diet Plus* and *Mealworm Diet Plus* respectively to 'load' the insect with vitamins and minerals but do not do both! Other insects that are eaten include Waxworms but these are best given only occasionally as a treat. Another occasional meal that may be accepted by the larger specimens are the commercially prepared, fresh meat reptile diets or a frozen rodent pup that has been thoroughly thawed. With all food it is important to balance the nutrients. These lizards grow very rapidly, so any dietary deficiency will quickly result in deformity. Calcium and the associated vitamin D<sub>3</sub> being particularly important.

Live food is only eaten if it is seen to move and will usually be captured by means of a long sticky tongue. One lizard may eat up to ten or more insects at one meal; it will depend upon their size. Feed the lizards every day with just enough to be completely eaten in about fifteen minutes. Try not to leave any uneaten insects in the cage.

In addition to live food, a few specimens seem to eat flowers and leafy salads.

A small water dish kept full of fresh water should always be available. This is just a safe guard as most specimens will never drink from it. Chameleons drink drops of water they find on surfaces like leaves. To give them sufficient moisture in captivity it is necessary to spray the foliage and cage walls with a small hand sprayer each day. The droplets so formed should be enough to water the lizards. The whole cage, however, should dry out completely in about half an hour. Any longer and damp induced complications may result.

#### ...Reproduction

Male Chameleons are proportionately larger than the females and may have crests, horns or other adornments. The males are usually brighter coloured and have a different pattern to the females. Other characteristics include a more bulbous base to the tail but for precise information, look up the details of the species being kept.

A period of courtship proceeds mating and during this time much activity can be expected. Eggs are laid after mating and they may take several weeks to hatch. To grow to adult in captivity may take as short a time as twelve months but in the wild, two to five years may elapse. A cooler winter period will be needed to condition the lizards for breeding in the following season.

#### ...Health & Disease

Chameleons live for many years in the wild but seem to live even longer in captivity. They do not suffer from many diseases and veterinary attention is rarely needed. An environment and diet as described in this leaflet will preclude most problems. The most often encountered disease will be a metabolic bone disorder caused by insufficient vitamin D<sub>3</sub> or calcium. Good practice, hygiene and first aid will probably deal with rest. If real disease is discovered, a vet must of course, be consulted. Pet lizards do not pose a real threat to human health. All the normal hygiene precautions regarding humans and animals should, however, be observed.

N.B. The Euro Rep Leopard Gecko Starter Kit is NOT suitable for this species of lizard.