Aurora ANIMAL + HOSPITAL
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Jackson's Chameleon Care

Please note these care sheets are intended for the average reptile owner to ensure that your pet is receiving basic care needed to have a healthy life and there are other aspects of advanced care that can be considered for healthy pets.

Brief Introduction:
The Jackson's chameleon *(Triocerus jacksonii xantholophus)* is a medium sized species native to the mountainous regions of Kenya, Uganda and northern Tanzania. Though smaller and less colorful than other common chameleon species, they are easily recognized by the male's three prominent horns, which give them a prehistoric look. Interestingly Jackson's do not lay eggs but instead give birth to live young! Their color changes are influenced most by their state of health, emotions or level of stress, and the process of thermoregulation. They are territorial and do not tolerate the presence of other chameleons in close proximity, despite the myth that Jackson's can be housed communally. Like other chameleons they are a pet that is more for observation and should not be handled regularly.



Lifespan: With proper husbandry Jackson's chameleons can live 3-6 years on average.

Identification:
Male Jackson's chameleons can be differentiated from females by the three prominent horns on their head. Females do not have horns, or may have only one very small one at the tip of the nose.

Cage Size:
Jackson's chameleons are territorial and easily stressed by the presence of other chameleons, even of their own species. No more than ONE chameleon should ever be kept in the same cage (not even male and female pairs). Cages should be furnished with many plants and climbing branches to provide opportunities for exercise and plenty of places for hiding. Substrate (mulch, soil, etc.) should not be used in chameleon cages. Enclosures should be at minimum 18x18x36" tall.

Temperature:
Reptiles are ectotherms (cold-blooded), meaning they need to absorb heat from their environment to regulate their own body heat since they cannot produce it. They need a warm place to bask (**80-85 degrees**) at the top of the cage in order digest food and nutrients properly. The lower part of the cage should be cooler (**65-70 degrees**) so they don't overheat. A thermometer should be placed at both parts of the cage to accurately measure temperatures. Your chameleon will utilize different temperature zones throughout the day depending on its metabolism and needs. Lights should be on for 10-12 hours each day and then total darkness at night. Night temperatures can safely drop to 60 degrees so a night time heat source is not necessary.

Chameleons MUST have UVB light to survive and a lack of UVB will lead to Metabolic Bone Disease, severe illness, and death. A bulb that specifically provides UVB is necessary as UVB does not penetrate glass or plastic, so having the cage near a window is not adequate. T5 or T8 Zoo Med Reptisun 10.0 or Arcadia 12% are the preferred high quality brands. After about 6 months of use the bulbs will stop emitting adequate levels of UVB, even though they are still shining, so it's important to change the bulb every 6 months.

Food & Nutrition:
Jackson's chameleons are insectivores meaning they should only be fed **live** insects. Great feeder insects include crickets, silkworms, hornworms, butterworms, dubia roaches and superworms. Wax worms and mealworms should only be given as a treat because of the high fat content and low digestibility. The rule of thumb is to not feed insects that are longer than the width of your chameleon's head. Juveniles should be fed every day while adults can be fed every other day.

- Neonates: as many small crickets as they can eat in 10 minutes
- Juveniles: 10-20 small-medium crickets daily
- Adults: 7-10 medium-large crickets every other day

Humidity & Hydration:
Jackson's chameleons require levels around 60-80%, which can be achieved by several misting sessions a day over all areas of the cage, using a cool mist humidifier, or a timer-controlled misting system. Higher humidity levels at night may be beneficial. Water for drinking can be provided by means of a, which should be placed on top of the cage so that the water droplets drip down and accumulate on plant leaves. Chameleons do not generally recognize standing water as a drinking source and standing water or waterfalls can be a safety/hygiene concern.

Gutloading
Gutloading is the process of feeding crickets, superworms, and/or dubia roaches a nutritious diet so they can ultimately provide your reptile with the proper nutrients it requires as it would in nature. Supplementing with a calcium and multivitamin powder is important, but not sufficient alone.

Creating a well-rounded gutload at home can seem daunting but can actually be fairly inexpensive and easy to make! Each time you go to the store get one or two staple vegetables on the list above, then rotate them for something else next time. Make sure you wash all produce to eliminate pesticide residues and cut off the peel of fruits and vegetables as they have waxes and pesticides you can't wash off. The time from feeding insects to your reptile eating those insects should be 12-48 hours, and gutloading must be done before every feeding to be successful.

Staple Insect Gutloading Ingredients (Highest in calcium and other nutrients)					
					
Collard Greens	Turnip Greens	Mustard Greens	Escarole	Endive	Dandelion

Good Insect Gutloading Ingredients (Use as supplements to staples listed above)					
					
Sweet Potato	Papaya	Kale	Butternut Squash	Berries	Mango
Commercial gutloads: Repashy Superload, Cricket Crack, Super Chow					

Avoid These Ingredients (Low in calcium and/or high in phosphorus, oxalates, goitrogens)
Idaho potatoes, cabbage, iceberg lettuce, spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, corn, grains, beans, bread, cereal, meat, eggs, dog food, cat food, fish food, canned or dried insects, vertebrates (pinkies, lizards). While convenient, some commercially available gutloads (Farms Orange Cubes, Fluker Farms High Calcium Cricket Diet, Nature Zone Cricket Bites) are low in calcium, imbalanced and/or insufficient for good nutrition.

Supplementation
Chameleons are especially susceptible to metabolic bone disease which results from a lack of calcium and/or UVB lighting. Feeder insects should be lightly dusted with powdered supplement before being fed to your chameleon. As a montane species (native to higher altitudes) Jackson's have decreased supplementation requirements compared to tropical species due to metabolism differences. Use calcium (without D3 or phosphorus) twice a week, a multivitamin once a month, and calcium with D3 once a month.

Egg Laying & Breeding
Interestingly Jackson's chameleons do not lay eggs but are viviparous (give birth to live young) after a 6-9 month gestation! Since they do not lay eggs, a laying bin does not need to be provided. They can however drop "slugs", which are the membranes and yolk that was never fertilized. A single breeding may produce several clutches from the same pairing due to sperm retention by the female. A few weeks before giving birth the female will usually have decreased appetite or stop eating and become restless. Average clutch size is 7-30 young. The young are born amongst leaves and branches wrapped in a membrane that they need to break open once born. Neonates should be immediately removed from the cage with the mother as predation on the young has been known to occur. The males are born with small nubs where their horns will grow in the future. Babies reach sexual maturity at about 9 months of age.

For more information on Lighting, Cage Setup, Nutrition, Humidity, Health and other questions, visit http://www.chameleonforums.com