

Ackies Monitor

Common Group – Varanus

Common Name – Ackies Monitor

Scientific Name – Varanus Acanthurus

Distribution Area – Australia

Natural History

Ackies Monitors are found widely throughout most of Australia. They are found in arid dry regions or scrubland environments throughout Western Australia, Northern Territory, and parts of Queensland. Living near rocky outcroppings, they will retreat into crevices and puff up their bodies to wedge themselves between the rocks when frightened. They live in humid burrows, which are dug deep to escape the midday heat and control their hydration and temperature levels. Ackies Monitors are a popular monitor species to own because they are inquisitive, active, and have great colors and patterns, and relatively small size.

Size and Longevity

Ackies Monitors grow to reach an average length of 24 – inches with males usually being the large. Ackies Monitors like most monitors can live a long time with average life spans of 15 to 20 years if properly housed and maintained.

Housing

When housing any Ackies monitors keep in mind they actively hunt, explore, bask, and burrow. With this in mind I would recommend a 48" x 24" x 24" or larger glass terrarium from Creative Habitat and Penn Plax which we sell online and in our stores. It is best to give them a tall cage to give them a deep substrate to burrow. Remember if you ever question the size of your cage bigger is always better with monitor species.

Heating and Lighting

Since Ackies Monitors come from Australia they should be provided with a basking zone of around 115 degrees with the cooler side getting no lower than 65 degrees and no warmer than 80 degrees. We do this using Red spot bulb and thermostat control (Habistat Dimmer) This is critical since all reptiles are cold blooded and need to regulate their body temperatures by the temperatures of their environment. The best way to do this is by giving them as many areas of different temperatures as possible. Also since Ackies Monitors are basking lizards they needed UVB to make Vitamin D3 which

helps with the absorption of Calcium, and if not given this it may lead to Metabolic Bone Disease(MBD). I would recommend using 12% t5 Lighting to provide the animal with UVB. Do not leave any visible light on at night as this will stress your animal out keep them on a 12-hour cycle (12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness). This can be accomplished simply by you turning the light on in the morning and turning it off at night, or by a timer. If you find that even you

Substrate and Furnishing

Ackies Monitors love to burrow and needed a substrate to hold humidity and its shape. Zoo Med's Eco earth when lightly compressed in the cage holds its shape and humidity nicely as do most coconut beddings and cypress chip bedding are all highly recommended. Making the substrate layer thick and moist will aid in keeping your monitor hydrated and shedding properly. There are a variety of ways to provide hiding spots, which include cork bark stacks, half logs, flat pieces of wood, thick layers of bedding and moss, caves, and lots of cover in the form of fake plants. A monitor's need to hide and stay warm can be duly accomplished in the form of providing a stack of cork bark or wood underneath the basking light, with the highest level being a few inches away and the hottest spot in the cage, and the lower levels being significantly cooler. This will allow your Ackies to thermoregulate its temperature and still feel secure. The key to success in a monitor's cage is to offer the lizard as many choices as possible. The more options the monitor has to utilize for thermoregulating, hiding, or basking, the better it will do.

Water and Humidity

The key to keeping an Ackies hydrated is to keep a water bowl that is large enough for it to soak in, so that it has the option to do so if it wants. They like the surface and air to be dry and their burrows to be moist. A good way to keep burrows moist is to add water into them when the animal is out and about and not in the burrow. Also mist the cage once to twice a day will help keep the humidity levels up and aid in proper shedding and hydration.

Nutrition

Ackies monitors in captivity have been known to take a wide range of prey items, including: mice, crickets, hissing cockroaches, mealworms, Zoo Med's canned food diets, snails, eggs (chicken, quail, and leopard gecko), and shrimp. It should be noted that just because a monitor can eat something, that does not mean that it is a suitable food. While a wide variety of food will be accepted, some foods are more readily eaten than others and some are far more appropriate as food items than others. While these monitors will eat dog and cat food, it is not recommended as a part of the diet.

Ideally, a diet consisting almost entirely of whole prey items with a small portion consisting of the raw turkey and egg diet is best. Suitable prey items include hissing cockroaches, dubia roaches, lobster roaches, crickets, mealworms, All food items, with the exception of rodents, should be dusted with a high quality calcium and/or vitamin powder, such as Stick Tongue Farms MinerAll Indoor Formula. Young monitors can be kept mainly on crickets, mealworms, and small roaches, while adult monitors can be fed the entire range of possible food items. Rodents should be fed in moderation, leaning on the side of fewer rodents than insects. Captive monitors rarely, if ever, get the same kind of exercise wild monitors do, and care should be taken to ensure that an adult monitor does not become obese.

Handling

In addition to being fascinating and hardy captives, Ackies Monitors are relatively easy to handle. With calm, confident handling on a regular (but not necessarily frequent) basis, these monitors learn to tolerate and even enjoy human interaction. Care must be given to allow the monitor plenty of time to acclimate before any attempts at developing an owner-monitor bond can really begin. Once the monitor shows a healthy appetite and eats readily, and does so regularly, start handling it for just a few minutes at a time daily. If the monitor continues to eat and does not spend the time immediately after handling buried beneath the substrate, avoiding you at all costs, increase the handling time slowly but surely, until the monitor does not mind being out for extended periods of time. Always be sure to read your monitor's behavior: If it hides and does not move for days on end after being handled, decrease handling time and frequency. With patience, eventually these monitors can and will become tame