

Bosc Monitor Care Sheet

The Bosc or Savannah Monitor (*Varanus exanthematicus*) is a large species of monitor lizard native to Africa. The Bosc Monitor occupies a variety of habitats in Africa. Its preferred habitat is the savannah, but they have adapted to other habitats as well, such as rocky desert type areas, open forests and woodlands. However they are not found in the rainforest or deserts. The Bosc monitor is known as a medium sized species of the monitor family. Boscs are a popular choice for a first time monitor owner. They require a lot of time and attention but make a great pet when cared for properly. They have a wide head, which is fairly blunt at the snout and wide at the ears with a short neck. Their tails are short and tapers with a double-toothed crest. They are not sexually dimorphic so are difficult to sex as adult. Bosc monitors can reach lengths of 5 foot in length but more commonly will grow to a length of between 4-5 foot. If given the right care you can expect a life expectancy of around 10 – 15 years.

Housing

The ideal enclosure for an adult Bosc monitor is a vivarium around 8x2x2 foot. You may find however that some boscs will happily live in a smaller enclosure (6x2x2) whereas others will want a much larger area. If space is a problem, then a tall vivarium can be used with many levels, especially if you have a particularly active Bosc (7x3x3). The young would happily live in a smaller enclosure, but will quickly outgrow it. To save you some money, you could buy a vivarium big enough for an adult, and section it off, moving the section as the monitor grows. For substrate dirt proves to be the best as the risk of impaction is greatly reduced.. For a smaller enclosure eco-earth mixed with a small amount of sand and/or vermiculite will suffice, but for an adult this will need to be provided on a much larger scale. Choose dirt that holds humidity and drains well, is not too dusty, and does not turn to slime when wet. Many hobbyists mix 60% soil with 30% sand and 10% vermiculite, which proves to be an effective mixture.

Heating and Lighting

You will find many sites and care sheets provide different information as to whether UV light required. As Bosc Monitors are a diurnal (active during the day) IUV lighting should be provided. A 12% tube would suffice,. Bosc Monitors require additional heating to help the digestion of their food, by not providing this most basic requirement you are putting your new pet at risk. The Basking (or hot spot) should be around 90-100F (32-38C) and a cool end of around 75F (24C). You should be aiming for an ambient temperature of around 85-90F (29-32C). The best way to provide this is via a spot light. This will need to be plugged into a thermostat to regulate the temperatures, making sure that the enclosure does not get too hot or cold. You may find it difficult to heat a large enclosure, so a row, or bank of heat lights, wired into a thermostat may be needed. If providing additional UV lighting this should be turned off at night. Nighttime temperatures should be around 72F (22C) as most peoples homes are around this temperature at night, then additional heating during the night may not be required.

Feeding

The feeding of Bosc monitors has been up for debate lately. It basically boils down to whether to feed mainly rodents or insects. Live prey which can be offered include Locusts, Crickets and Roaches. Meal and Wax worms can also be offered as a treat. Any live food given should be gut loaded (Leave dusted veg in with the food for 12-24 hours) and should also be dusted with vitamins. These should be alternated between multi-vitamin and pure calcium. Rodents that can be offered include mice and rats. Rabbits, Chicks, Hamsters, Gerbils, Guinea Pigs, Quail and Pheasant can also be offered as a treat, but are not as nutritious. Live rodents should never be offered, as the prey items can hurt and injure your monitor in an attempt to defend themselves. You should also avoid collecting your own specimens for feeding, as you do not know what the insects/rodents have been eating, instead search online or ask your local reptile specialist if they can source any of the above rodents. Other food items will be eagerly accepted, but are not as necessary for balanced nutrition. These include snails, eggs, fish and molluscs.

Young boscs will need to eat a great deal, and should be feed almost on a daily / every other day basis. Adults will feed less often, and a popular choice amongst hobbyist is to alternate, with 1-2 times a week live food, once a week with rodents. Many hobbyists also offer offal from the butchers as part of their diet. Items include heart, liver, kidney, brain etc. Contrary to popular belief (and many care sheets) Dog and Cat food should NEVER be fed to any monitor. They are not very nutritious, can cause severe obesity, and even lead to kidney and liver failure.

Exercise

If given the choice many Bosc monitors would happily spend all day sleeping, only moving occasional from hot spot, to cool to regulate their temperature. Therefore additional stimulates need to be added into your boscs weekly regime as they are commonly associated with obesity. Bath time proves to be the most common form of exercise. Your Bosc will enjoy the swim around, which is good for muscle strength and keeps them in shape. You may also find your monitor will use bath time as a means to go to the toilet, as it can be a very relaxing experience for them. They also love a venture out of their enclosure, and it is good idea to encourage them out of their vivarium to have a wonder round the house., and can walk around the garden, on a nice hot summers day.