

## General Pygmy Caresheet

Origin: Brookesia are found in Madagascar, Rhampholeon are found in Africa.

Size: Varies with different species. The most common pygmy chameleon in the pet trade, *R. brevicaudatus*, reaches a maximum total length of 3.2".

Lifespan: Varies. Usually 2-5 years.

Housing: It is important to house your pygmy chameleon in an enclosure that has adequate ventilation. Glass aquariums used for fish do not allow the proper amount of ventilation and, therefore, are not a good choice. Good enclosures are mesh, screen, or special chameleon enclosures that have a glass front and back, but the sides and top are ventilated..

Be sure to set your enclosure away from direct sunlight. Pygmies have a tendency to overheat, and keeping your enclosure near a window will increase the chance of having a pygmy fatality.

Once you have chosen your enclosure, it's time to landscape. I have a step-by-step guide on creating a naturalistic pygmy enclosure on this page. I use at least 2" of 50/50 mixture of organic potting soil and peat moss. Dried sphagnum moss is placed on top and sprayed thoroughly. *Ficus benjamina* trees are a favorite of my pygmies, though other pygmy-safe plants such as pothos, ferns, etc. are used as well.

Temperature: Varies. Pygmy chameleons easily overheat and should be kept at room temperature or slightly above. The maximum temperature for *R. brevicaudatus* is 77 degrees Fahrenheit. Please carefully research the specific type of pygmy you are purchasing to make sure that the temperatures are correct. Feel free to e-mail me anytime if you have any temperature questions. If I don't know, I'll help you find the answer.

Feeding:

Pygmy chameleons will eat many different types of small prey items. Small crickets, fruit flies, springtails, firebrats, nymph roaches, etc. are all readily accepted. Don't forget to supplement! I "shake and bake" my feeder insects in Rep-Cal and Herptivite before tossing them into the pygmy enclosure.

Also, be careful of how many feeder insects you put into the enclosure. Too many insects will stress your pygmies.

I manually spray my enclosures 2x a day. Misting systems can also be used if you spend a lot of time away.

Breeding: (General breeding

QUICK TIP- Only house one male pygmy per enclosure.

When a male approaches a female, she will either be ready to mate or will be non-receptive. If she is not receptive, she will rebuff him by turning away, opening her mouth to threaten him, etc. A receptive female will let the male mount her, and may also go for a casual stroll around the enclosure (carrying the male during the process).

About a month after mating, the female will dig a tunnel to lay her eggs. Clutches are usually about 2-6 eggs, though I have found as many as 10. I prefer to remove the eggs from the enclosure and incubate them separately, using the same perlite method as I do with my crested geckos. Hatchling pygmies will emerge between 41-92 days (depending on incubation temperature) and are less than an inch long. If you have not already done so, hatchlings should be separated into a different enclosure to be raised on fruit flies, pinhead crickets, and springtails. I raise my hatchlings in pygmy "nurseries", with groups of up to 12 same-sized individuals.

R. brevicaudatus eggs:

Other: When threatened, certain types of pygmies will "play dead" (akinesis) if their camouflage strategy does not work. When touched, they will fall to the ground in a curled position until the threat has passed. Another behavior that some pygmies exhibit when threatened is "buzzing" or vibrating. You can feel this sometimes when you transfer a pygmy chameleon from a deli cup to its enclosure. Some believe this vibrating serves as a defense against ant attacks, however, at this point it still remains speculation.