

American Chameleons (Anoles)

Anolis carolinensis

CAGING: Anoles should be kept in a cage that is escape-proof and easy to clean. Aquariums with secure covers make good cages. Newspaper (black and white only) or good paper towels make good substrate (bedding) as they are easily removed and inexpensive. Some people prefer the more natural look of AstroTurf. This works fine, as long as it is carefully washed and disinfected once a week. Don't use sand or other fine grained material which might be eaten with their food. This can kill them. Do provide branches or crumpled newspaper so that your lizards have places to climb and hide. Plastic aquarium plants, suspended from the top of the cage, work well.

WATER: Anoles prefer a slightly humid environment. There are two ways to provide this. The first is to use a plant mister and lightly spray the cage two or three times a day. The second way is to get a small aquarium pump, some tubing, and an air stone. Connect the tubing to both the pump and the air stone. Place the air stone in a glass or dish of water, and place the water inside the cage (leaving the pump outside). Let the pump run continuously. The lizards will drink the droplets which form on the dish and tubing. Whichever method you chose, always provide a water dish, and keep all water sources full.

TEMPERATURE Anoles are native to Central America and southern North America, so they are used to warm temperatures. Your lizard will do best at a temperature of 80-85 degrees F. This can be achieved with an incandescent bulb and a heating pad. Place the heating pad under part of the cage, and place the light either above the cage (but not so close that the lizard can be burned) or a few inches from one of the glass sides. Keep a thermometer in the cage so you know the exact temperature. The light bulb lets your lizard bask as it wishes and the heating pad keeps it warm at night when the light is off. The light shouldn't be on more than 10 hours a day. When it's on, the heating pad can be turned off. Never leave the cage in direct sunlight!

FOOD: Anoles are insect eaters and will eat mealworms, crickets, waxworms, roaches, flies, moths, and other insects. Don't feed them a steady diet of mealworms; the hard shells can kill them. Try varying their diet. It's a good idea to occasionally dust your food insects with a vitamin powder (obtained at pet shops) before feeding them to your lizard. This ensures that it is getting an adequate diet. Mail order food sources can be found in the ads in the back of sporting magazines, under 'Bait'.

CLEANING: Cages must be kept clean to prevent disease. Anti-bacterial cleaning solutions are recommended. One ounce of bleach in ten ounces of water is one such solution. Rinse the cage with clean water after using any solution. Don't use Lysol, Lestoil or other such oil based cleaners; they are deadly to reptiles.

HANDLING: Handle your lizards as little as possible. They are delicate, nervous animals and can be easily injured or overstressed. If given proper care, though, they will live two or three years, minimum.

This Care Sheet was originally written by New England Herpetological Society. It can be found at www.neherp.com or www.AnimalCityInc.com



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