



Husbandry Handbook

SAVANNAH MONITOR

Varanus exanthematicus

A Large Land Carnivore

As one of the most popular pet lizard species available, the savannah monitor is a large stocky lizard that will mature to be 3½ to 4 feet long. If provided with the proper care and husbandry, these lizards can live 15 to 25 years. They're a highly intelligent lizard that uses their claws, limbs, and tails for climbing, digging burrows and swimming. A savannah monitor's base color can range from brown to tan or even gray. They also have white spots and ocelli along their back and tail.

Habitat

Savannah monitors are a terrestrial species found in the grasslands, savannahs, and rocky areas of sub Saharan Africa. They are most active during the cooler daylight hours when they are searching for food. To regulate their temperature, savannahs often dig underground burrows to stay cool and lay on large rocks for basking.

Housing

Savannah monitors require sealed and escape proof housing. As hatchlings, they can start out in a Size 10 to 20 Long Zilla® Critter Cage. It's important to remember that as they grow and develop, they will require larger accommodations. Adult savannahs will require at least a 6 foot by 3 foot enclosure. Custom designed pens can be the most suitable housing for adult monitors. These lizards are powerful diggers and adults should be provided with 18 to 24 inches of substrates, while 3 inches of substrates would be adequate for a juvenile monitor. Appropriate substrates include the Zilla® Jungle Mix, Bark Blend or Coconut Husk Brick. A hide box, driftwood, logs or Zilla® Rock Lair should be provided. Remember to change their water supply at least every other day to maintain sanitary conditions.

Temperature and Lighting

It's important to remember to create a thermal gradient in the enclosure with a tank heating pad and ceramic heat lamp. The ambient temperature should be between mid 70s to 80s or even 90°F. Basking temperatures on one side of the enclosure can reach 120°F to 150°F. Savannah monitors also require overhead UVA/UVB fluorescent lighting. The Zilla® Mini Dome with a 50W Day White Zilla® Mini Halogen Bulb and Zilla® Reflector Dome with a Zilla® Pro Series Desert Fluorescent Coil Bulb will provide the monitor with enough heat and UVB lighting.

Feeding and Diet

In their natural environment, savannah monitors are primarily insectivorous, and carnivorous when the opportunity presents itself. Savannah monitors should be given feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, superworms, waxworms and mealworms sprayed with Zilla® Calcium Supplement. Raw food items such as turkey, eggs, beef, or frozen-thawed rodents of appropriate size can also be fed but should not be a staple diet. Monitors should be fed two to three times weekly. Juveniles and hatchlings may need to be fed more often. It's important to remember not to overfeed monitors as they are prone to obesity.

Handling

Monitors require a considerable amount of time and patience in order for them to become docile as adults. Hatchling monitors should be carefully handled with both hands. Adult monitors should be handled from underneath using your hand and arm for support.

Be sure to wash your hands after handling any animals.

