



A simple case of mistaken identity.

Also known as the “Western Bearded Anole,” this species is actually an anole lizard and not a chameleon. Like chameleons though, ‘false chameleons’ have independent eye movement and a bony casque. Unlike most anoles, they lack the ability to regrow their tails if their tails should succumb to trauma. Looking for an exotic looking, easy-to-care-for addition to your home? Try the Cuban false chameleon!

Lifespan

A short lived species, Cuban false chameleons have an average lifespan of 3-6 years.

Size

These anoles reach mature lengths of about 7”. Surprisingly, this species does not exhibit any widely exaggerated features among the sexes as do other anole species. Males may have a slightly larger head than females, but otherwise, the only way to distinguish a male from a female is the presence of hemipenile lumps behind the cloaca, which look like enlarged scales behind the vent.

Natural History

Cuban false chameleons are endemic to Cuba and usually inhabit dense forests. They are diurnal, which means they are most active during the day, but can be quite shy and inactive. In fact, they can be quite the lounge lizard. These anoles perch on large twigs and rely on their cryptic coloration to avoid predators. They’ll even sway back and forth to appear as if they are nothing more than a branch swaying in the wind. While insectivores, this species specializes in eating snails.

Housing

Enclosure size depends on the age and size of your anole. Baby anoles do best in smaller enclosures to ensure ease in thermoregulation and the ability to find food. When it comes to adult anoles however, a glass enclosure minimum of 18”x18”x24” tall is recommended. These anoles can be housed separately or in opposite sex pairs. Never house 2 males together.

Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For Cuban false chameleons, these diurnal, arboreal lizards enjoy consistent temperatures and moderate humidity.

Provide your anole with a basking temperature of 90F at the top of your enclosure. Properly position a vine or a branch a safe distance from the light. The ambient daytime temperature should remain around 75F, and never fall below 70F at night. Humidity should fall somewhere around 70%. The use of white incandescent basking bulbs for the day are perfect for generating appropriate basking temperatures.

Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure; in this case, the top and bottom of your anole's enclosure. Measure basking temperatures with a temperature gun or a digital thermometer with a probe.

These lizards need ultraviolet light. UVB is essential in the absorption and metabolism of calcium and D3. Additionally, exposure to appropriate wavelengths of UV can provide a day/night cycle for your lizard and display your pet in its best colors. Providing a low output UVB is a necessity and not just a recommendation.

Substrates & Cage Décor

Cuban false chameleons are arboreal, tree dwelling lizards and as such require plenty of branches and plants to climb on. Sandblasted manzanita and grapewood, vertically positioned cork rounds, wooden dowels, and artificial vines work well for providing your anole with climbing opportunities. Most artificial plants as well as live plants provide visual barriers and may boost humidity levels in the enclosure.

With rare exceptions, these anoles will not always drink from a water bowl and as such require a different approach for staying hydrated than terrestrial species. You should expect to mist their enclosure 3-4 times a day with a hand sprayer or pressurized pump sprayer as an option. It is important to note that the enclosure should not remain continuously wet, so expect dry periods in between misting. Additionally, proper drainage is a must. To prevent pooled water from building up at the bottom of your anole's enclosure, some pet parents opt to use a drip pan for water collection, which is dumped regularly, or create a false bottom using screen, clay pellets or pea gravel beneath substrate.

Diet & Nutrition

All anoles are insectivores, meaning they'll thrive off a diet of appropriately sized and gut loaded crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, black soldier larvae, etc. But this particular species specializes in snails, so snails should make up some of their diet. Superworms and hornworms can be offered as a treat. Provide younger anoles with two opportunities a day to eat whatever they'll consume within 10 minutes. Older anoles may be offered food 4-5 times a week.

Supplementation ingredients and formulations vary greatly, and there are differing opinions on what works best. A quality calcium w/D3 and multivitamin for use with every feeding is recommended. Simply dust insects by placing them and dusting powder into a plastic bag or deep tin and shake gently to coat insects with the powder. Food may be offered in an insect escape proof cup, dropped into the enclosure, or tong fed.

Handling & Temperament

As a standard, do not handle your anole until it has settled into its new home – this may take several weeks. It is recommended to handle your anole as often as it is comfortable with. An anole will show it is stressed by turning black, hissing, puffing up, turning to bite, or refusing to eat. If you are concerned about whether your anole enjoys handling or not, assume that it does not, and allow it to be a beautiful animal to display in your home.