



A lizard with the most impressive defensive display.

As the second largest lizard in the Agamidae family with an iconic “frill,” it is easy to see this lizard’s appeal. Affectionately called “frillies,” frilled lizards (aka Frilled Dragons) exhibit a flap of skin around their neck that they project upward to put on a deimatic display; a bluffing behavior that makes themselves appear larger and more intimidating to predators when threatened.

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## Lifespan

With proper care, these lizards can live up to 10 years.

## Size

Depending on the species, male frilled lizards can grow 2-3 feet long. Females tend to be smaller, at about 2/3 the size of males.

## Natural History

Frilled lizards can be found in the most southern parts of New Guinea and northern coastlines of Australia. They tend to be arboreal, meaning they spend a majority of their lives in trees. Occasionally they can be found in the lower parts of its desert range, but frilled lizards primarily inhabit humid climates, such as tropical savannah woodlands. They were once only attainable as wild caught adults, but young, captive bred individuals are now available.

## Housing

Frilled lizards demand a large, vertically oriented enclosure. As a juvenile, these arboreal lizards can be kept in a 24”x18”x36” sized enclosure, but as adults they will need an enclosure that is at least 6’ tall 2’ wide and 4’ long. Additionally, due to their somewhat vigilant nature, it is best that the enclosure be visually limited; in other words, three sides of the enclosure should be solid or blocked off to create a visual barrier against the outside world to reduce stress – cardboard, paint, or other materials can be used to block the sides of the enclosure. This is a solitary species and it is best that they are housed alone.

## Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For frilled lizards, these arboreal reptiles enjoy consistently warm temperatures and high levels of humidity.

As a semi tropical species, frilled lizards should be kept warm with a narrow temperature drop at night. Provide your lizard with a basking spot of 115F at the top of the enclosure, with an ambient temperature between 85-90F. At night, temperatures can drop between 75-80F. Humidity levels should fall between 60-70%.

Never use heat rocks as these may burn your lizard! Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends, or in this case the top and bottom of the enclosure.

Frilled lizards need ultraviolet light, necessary 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 high output UVB is a necessity and not just a recommendation for this species.

## Substrates & Cage Décor

Frilled lizards are arboreal, tree dwelling lizards and as such require plenty of branches and plants to climb on. Branches of various diameters can be placed vertically, diagonally, & horizontally in the enclosure to provide your lizard with dynamic climbing and basking opportunities. As far as substrate is concerned, a mix of coco fiber, playsand, and organic top soil or cypress mulch can be used.



As a relatively active but wary species, frilled lizards require setups that make them feel safe and secure within their enclosure. This means plenty of coverage! Most artificial plants as well as live plants provide excellent visual barriers and may boost humidity levels in the enclosure. Additional hiding spots or aesthetic pieces such as cork bark flats, half logs, and some commercially available décor can be used when setting up the enclosure.

With rare exceptions, frilled lizards will not usually drink from a water bowl and as such require a different approach for staying hydrated than terrestrial species. Pet parents will still need to provide a large, shallow water bowl but as juveniles, you should expect to mist their enclosure 3-4 times a day with a hand sprayer or pressurized pump sprayer. Healthy adults can be misted once a day.

Automation provides the best option for keeping your lizard hydrated, not to mention making your lizard's care easier. A quality automatic rain system, while more expensive, can provide humidity spikes and hydration throughout the day if it is not your preference to hand mist them. 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 lizard's enclosure, some pet parents opt to use a drip pan for water collection, which is dumped regularly, or create a drainage layer if setting up a \*bioactive enclosure.

## Diet & Nutrition

Frilled lizards are primarily insectivores. This means that they should be offered gutloaded, dusted insects regularly. Insects include gut loaded crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, silkworms, black soldier larvae, and canned grasshoppers. Superworms, waxworms, and hornworms may be offered as a treat.

As a rule, young frillies should be offered insects which are no larger than the space between their eyes daily. This could mean that you are purchasing insects often, or housing them at home. It is not uncommon to keep insects alongside keeping frilled lizards in the home, especially while they are growing for the first year of their life. Adult dragons may also be offered insects, but not as frequently – several times a week should suffice. They should also be misted with freshwater at every feeding.

All food should be dusted with a high quality calcium/D3 supplement at every feeding for babies, and every other feeding for adults. A high quality multivitamin is also recommended – follow manufacturers directions.

## Handling & Temperament

As with any new pet, avoid handling until your pet has acclimated to its new environment. Frilled lizards are amazing, intelligent reptiles but they are not for everyone. Many frillies do not enjoy being handled and are complacent enough to sit in their enclosures for the entirety of their lives. A frilled lizard that is stressed will open its mouth and turn to bite, puff up its body, stop eating, or may display its frill. If you are concerned about whether your lizard enjoys handling or not, assume that it does not and wait for its behavior to normalize before attempting it again. If handling is not your thing (or your lizard's thing!), then it is perfectly fine to allow it to be a beautiful animal to display in your home.