

Argus Monitor



Common Name: Monitor - Argus

Other Common Names: goanna
(Australia)

Scientific Name: *Varanus Panoptes*

Group: Monitors

Origin or Range: New Guinea, Australia

Size: 5-6 feet total length,
30 inches snout-vent

Average Lifespan: 15-20 years

Compatibility: Unpredictable
(as compared to other monitors)

Animal Description:

The Argus Monitor is a large, heavily built, powerful monitor, generally brown in color with a pattern of spots in rows across the back. The throat and legs are usually a bright yellow, and the ventral side a paler yellow. These monitors are known for standing up on their hind legs (tripoding), when curious or feeling threatened, and will readily do this in captivity. This is one of the larger varanids, and is also one of the most fearless and most intelligent. For this reason, its demeanor is unpredictable. They may become quite handleable in captivity, but the possibility of a warning bite is constantly present, so this monitor must be handled with care. They will learn to recognize individual humans, and react accordingly. Because of their intelligence and curiosity, they are a fascinating animal to observe, and may actually become bored if not supplied with stimulation. This also makes them a challenge to keep. These monitors are for experienced monitor keepers ONLY, and should not be kept around small children.

The Argus Monitor is native to the coasts and swamps of New Guinea, and the Australian outback. While individuals from the Australian Outback may be drought-hardy and prefer an arid environment, almost all of the individuals in the pet trade come from the New Guinea stock, and are more accustomed to a wetter environment. They are not climbers, and do well in a more horizontal enclosure. They are used to high daytime temperatures, and enjoy basking in hotter temperatures. When threatened, the Argus Monitor will bite, scratch, and tail whip. They are amazingly quick, and have razor-sharp teeth. While a bite may not become infected, it will be deep and long. They are fully capable of removing fingers from an adult human.

The Argus Monitor is one of the larger monitors. Their total length can reach up to six feet, approximately 60% of which is the tail. Their legs are heavy, with sharp claws, and the front claws are heavy and strong, and in the wild are used to dig burrows. The front claws need regular trimming, or they will grow long and the monitor will have trouble walking. In this state, they are also quite hard to trim. They have a fairly long neck, and can turn to bite a hand that is gripping them at the shoulders. Their teeth are long, curved backward, and razor-sharp on the back edge.

Hatchlings tend to have brighter colors than adults, with more yellow, and the pattern is more distinct. They will readily hiss and give a threat display if disturbed.

These animals are listed as CITES II and are no longer imported. All animals available in the US are captive bred.

Specific Care Information:**Relative Care Ease:** Average

Argus Monitors should be kept at a temperature of around 85 degrees Fahrenheit, with a basking area of between 120 and 130 degrees Fahrenheit. They should also be provided with full spectrum fluorescent lighting that provides twelve hours of light a day. At night, the temperature should be around 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

The enclosure for an Argus Monitor should be at least 3 feet high, 6 feet long and 3 feet deep for one lizard. The larger the enclosure, the more content the animal. Climbing areas are not necessary, as these animals are ground-dwellers; however, providing shelves for them to climb on may keep them from becoming bored. Hiding areas are essential; a pile of crumpled paper may suffice for this. Substrate may be papers, Care Fresh, cypress mulch, or dirt. Paper is easiest to change out when soiled, but don't use old newspapers, or your animal will become black from the newsprint. A burrowing box filled with dirt would be welcome, but is not necessary. The enclosure must be kept secure, as the intelligence and curiosity of these animals makes them an extreme escape risk.

The Argus Monitor's diet should be varied. They will readily feed on large arthropods, eggs, canned monitor diet, and rodents. Chasing large arthropods can provide intellectual stimulation. Live rodents should be avoided, but dangling them from long tongs for them to chase will also provide stimulation. Raw eggs are messy for the lizard's environment and the lizard and can lead to salmonella problems; hard-boiled eggs are better for this reason. They should have access to fresh water at all times, but do not require enough water to soak.

Regular exercise is absolutely essential for the Argus Monitor. Letting them out of the cage for a period each day will allow them to satisfy their curiosity about their surroundings, and get the exercise they need. It will also keep them from becoming bored. They can be trained to accept a harness and leash, but will not "walk" like a dog. They lead, you follow.