



CAL ZOO'S REFERENCE SHEET



SAVANNAH MONITORS

AKA Bosc Monitor

Latin name	Varanus exanthematicus	Average length	3.5 feet
Native to	Africa	Approximate life span	10 years

GENERAL INFORMATION

First described by Bosc in 1792, Savannah Monitors are among the most commonly kept monitor lizards. There are three main reasons for their popularity; 1) The ease at which they are tamed, 2) The relatively large but handleable size they attain, 3) Their affordability. Pre-tamed specimens may scare easily and run. If cornered, they might turn sideways, inflate their throats and hiss. A whip of the tail is not uncommon. The thick hide of the Savannah is a great defense against the bite of a predator. In fact, according to Robert Sprackland (Giant Lizards), Savannah Monitors are immune to the venom of large snakes including cobras.

ENCLOSURE

Baby Savannah Monitors require a minimum of a 10 gallon aquarium. This species grows fairly fast and will require larger enclosures to accommodate their increased size. Full-grown specimens may require custom-built enclosures. Provide a sturdy hiding place and branches for climbing and basking.

SUBSTRATE

There are a few good choices for a substrate. Newspaper is fine, but is boring and looks nothing like their natural environment. Although it is recommended that a few layers of newspaper be added to the bottom of the enclosure before adding the final substrate. This will help absorb and dissipate liquids making cage cleaning much easier. Over the newspaper use Zoo Med REPTI™ CAGE CARPET or REPTI-BARK. We do not recommend corn cob bedding because of its propensity to mold when wet and to swell when ingested. By no means should cedar ever be used, it's oils are toxic to reptiles.

TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Savannah Monitors naturally live in arid scrubland. Daytime temperatures should fall between 80°f to 85°f. Temperatures can reach as high as 95°f, but this should only be offered as a basking area. Nighttime lows can drop as much as 10 degrees for a temperature range of 70°f to 75°f. Humidity should be kept at a minimum.

HEATING

Zoo Med BASKING SPOT BULBS, CERAMIC HEAT EMITTERS and REPTITHERM® UNDER TANK HEATER (U.T.H.) are all excellent choices. Do not turn the tank heater off, leave it on 24 hours a day and use it in conjunction with a Zoo Med RHEOSTAT™ for easy heat control. Do not use a white light for nighttime heating. A red or blue spot light work great, especially if you plan on observing your monitor at night. If heat is the only concern, the best choice would be a CERAMIC HEAT EMITTER. Savannah Monitors will also enjoy a Zoo Med REPTICARE® ROCK HEATER, but be sure you choose a rock large enough so that your lizard doesn't completely cover the rock. This will restrict airflow and possibly cause the rock to overheat, placing your lizard at risk for a burn.

LIGHTING

Full spectrum lighting is required for Savannah Monitors. The Zoo Med REPTISUN 5.0™ with its high UVB and the Zoo Med REPTISUN 2.0™ with its high UVA output are excellent choices. The UVB is necessary for mineral absorption while UVA stimulates activity and psychological well being UVA also enhances the color of the animal. A UVA bulb is not a necessity, but holds great benefits. All reptiles and amphibians need a photo period. A plug in timer (for your lights only, do not use a timer for your heating devices) works well to develop a regular photo period (light cycle) of 8 - 10 hours of light, 14 - 16 hours of darkness.

FOOD & WATER

Savannah Monitors are strict carnivores. Bite sized offerings are best unless the food item can be easily torn by the lizard. Baby monitors do best with crickets, worms and snails. Oddly, enough, snails are their preferred diet. (If harvesting live food from your yard, be sure no insecticides have been used). Monitors will gradually progress to larger prey such as pinkie mice, adult mice and small rats. A high quality canned cat food, beef chunks and eggs are also good supplements. It is best to keep high fat/protein meals to a minimum due to long-term health problems and early death. Crickets, waxworms, night crawlers, ground turkey meat and snails should comprise the majority of their diet. Be sure to dust the food every-other feeding with a reptile vitamin such as REPTIVITE™. Small monitors should be fed every 2 - 3 days and medium to large sized monitors should be fed 2 - 3 times per week. Savannah Monitors are known for their appetites. While this should have no effect on immature lizards, adults can easily become overweight. Be sure your monitor gets plenty of exercise. Savannah Monitors are poor swimmers and prefer not to go into the water. A small to medium sized water bowl for drinking will be sufficient.

NOTES

Always wash your hands before and immediately after handling reptiles and amphibians. Never leave live food long term with reptiles & amphibians. They can inflict severe harm, even kill your pet. If your animals take some time to eat or you feed them at night, leave a slice of potato, carrot or dry dog food for the live food items to eat. Your local pet shop is an ideal source for reptile and amphibian related books and supplies. Please make sure

you read and become familiar with any instructions provided with reptile support products you may purchase. . For further information on reptiles and amphibians we recommend you read *REPTILES MAGAZINE* and *THE VIVARIUM*. California Zoological Supply hopes you have enjoyed reading this reference sheet on Savannah Monitors. We hope that our guidelines will assist you with the care or possible purchase of your new pet.

This sheet may be copied in its entirety only.