

Red Ackie Monitors Care Sheet

By: Curious Creatures LLC

This document is for guidance only and should not be used as the sole source of information. New information is being developed regularly. It is recommended to find multiple sources of information before buying a pet.

Common Name: Red Ackie Monitor

Scientific Name *Varanus acanthurus*

Native to: Northern Australia

Size Range: 24 to 30 inches

Life Span: 15 to 20 years

General appearance: Ackie monitors are long, slender monitors with a snakelike tongue, sharply tapered snout, somewhat rounded body, relatively short legs, and a whiplike tail. The body is typically red, brown, or black-brown with yellow, cream, or red spotting. The head typically features three pale stripes running from the face to the neck. The tail is long and covered in heavily keeled scales in a pattern of alternating light and dark rings, giving it a spiny appearance and function. The underside is typically pale and pattern less.

Enclosure: Ackie monitors love to dig but also love to climb. For our hatchlings we use a twenty gallon with 2 inches of substrate and a few branches and half logs as they will utilize the entire space. Juveniles are typically housed in 40 gallon or 4 foot enclosures while an enclosure for one adult must be at least 4'x2'x18. The more climbing surfaces the happier and more active your Ackie will be.

Heating and Lighting: Ackie Monitors originate from the savannah and deserts of Australia and thus need a very high basking spot. Hatchlings are provided a hot spot of 120 degrees while juveniles to adults are provided with basking temps of roughly 130 to 140! With the basking spot(s) on one side, the cool side should be around 80 degrees. If you are keeping more than one ackie, multiple basking spots are recommended to reduce potential fighting or bullying over only one spot. Many breeders and ackie pet owners don't use UVB lighting. It is still very debated topic around monitors. We, however, at Curious Creatures LLC provide Zoo Med Repti-Sun 10.0 in tubular form to our ackies starting from hatchlings to our adult breeders. The daylight (bright basking and UVB) is on for 12 hours and then off at night. Ackies cage temp will need a nighttime heat lamp (red or purple) to provide a hot spot of at least 80 degrees.

Substrate: Ackie monitors need a dry enclosure with lots of humidity. This is achieved by restricting ventilation and providing a deep substrate of 60% eco

earth and 40% play sand (DO NOT USE REPTILE SAND OR ANY SAND WITH CALCIUM IN IT; finely grained play sand is the best choice). The mix of play sand and eco earth is then mixed with warm water until the substrate can hold its own burrow (test it by poking your finger and if the hole holds you are good). If you have a screen top enclosure, you will need to rehydrate the substrate a couple times a week by mixing with warm water. Hatchlings are given a couple inches, while large juveniles to adults are provided with at least 6 to 8 inches of substrate.

Handling: Ackie monitors are so popular because of their relative small size (18-24 inches) and their handling. However, most hatchlings are usually a skittish. I have found that as they grow, Ackies become less skittish and more and more friendly towards their owner. This is usually achieved with using food and convincing the lizard you are their food god!

Diet: Ackies eat only crickets as hatchlings. At only a month old our hatchlings are able to chow down $\frac{3}{4}$ inch crickets and as they get older, are bowl feed Dubai roaches. Sub-adults are fed a varied diet of crickets, roaches, ground turkey and pinkie mice (f/t). Tong feeding will help start to tame them down.

Last Thoughts: Red Ackie monitors are beautiful and intelligent lizards. These lizards are very active and curious. They can become very tame with continued handling and by creating positive interactions (feeding, hand walking).