



Brown Anoles

Anolis sagrei

BEGINNER · 5-8 IN ADULT · 4-6 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · CUBA & BAHAMAS · NEVER RELEASE

The anole most Americans have actually met, whether they know it or not. *Anolis sagrei* came from Cuba and the Bahamas, and it now runs fence lines across Florida and the Gulf Coast as an established invasive. That history sets the first rule of keeping one: a brown anole never goes outside and is never released, no matter how many are already loose. Small, fast, endlessly busy, and better watched than handled.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient temp	78-88 °F
Basking spot	90-95 °F
Night temp	70-75 °F
Humidity	50-70%
UVB	5.0 required, 10-12 in over screen
Diet	Crickets, fruit flies
Feeding cadence	Every 1-2 days
Adult size	5-8 inches
Lifespan	4-6 years



Brown anoles are regulars on small-lizard tables at NARBC shows. Hardy and cheap, but an established US invasive: never release one.
Photo: Zygy / Wikimedia Commons · CC0

01

A Lizard to Watch, Not to Hold

Brown anoles are hardy and almost impossible to hold. They are built to sprint and jump, and a startled one is across the room before you finish reaching. Grab at one and it drops its tail. The regrown stub is never the same. Treat them as display animals; the behavior is the payoff. Males flash the throat fan and do pushups at anything that moves, and two adult males in one enclosure fight until one stops eating. One male per enclosure, never with green anoles or anything smaller.

02

Housing: Vertical and Escape-Proof

A hatchling starts in 8×8×12 and an adult wants 24×18×24; every stage goes vertical, and none belong in a rack. Brown anoles are a trunk-ground species, so branch the lower half heavily and leave a clear basking perch up top. A screen top vents heat but sheds humidity fast, so expect to cover part of it. The one rule with no exceptions: **never release a brown anole and never keep one where it can slip outdoors**. They are already established across the Gulf states.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	8×8×12	12×12×18	Same size and needs as a green anole. Vertical space, and never a rack.
Juvenile	12×12×18	18×18×18	More ground-oriented than green anoles: add low perches, not just high ones.
Subadult	18×18×18	18×18×24	Often wild-collected in the southern US; buy captive-bred where you can.
Adult	18×18×24	24×18×24	Trunk-ground ecomorph: they use the lower trunk, so branch it low and dense.

Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Every stage wants a vertical enclosure; racks are not an option for a lizard that climbs and basks.

03

Heat, Light, and the Basking Spot

Anoles are day lizards that bask, so heat from above and let them choose their spot. Run 78–88 °F ambient, a basking surface at 90–95 °F, and a night drop to 70–75 °F. A 5.0 UVB tube is required. Without it you get metabolic bone disease: a soft jaw, shaky limbs, and a lizard that stops climbing. Mount it above the screen, top perch 10 to 12 inches below and never closer, aiming for a UVI near 3. Glass and plastic block UVB; mesh cuts a quarter to half. Replace it on schedule, lit or not.

04

Humidity, and Water They Will Drink

Hold humidity at 50–70%, which in most rooms means misting by hand morning and evening and letting it dry between. Steady damp is worse than a wet-then-dry cycle; stale, soaked substrate breeds mold and skin trouble. The part new keepers miss is drinking. An anole will ignore a water bowl and drink beads off leaves and glass, so mist heavily enough to leave droplets, or run a dripper. A dish is still worth having for humidity, not for thirst.

05

Substrate, Plants, and Perches

Go with a soil-and-coir mix topped with leaf litter, or a bioactive setup if you want the humidity to hold itself. Skip sand entirely. Plants earn their keep here. A brown anole spends its day on low trunks and the ground, so give it cork rounds, thin branches angled at every height, and something broad-leaved like pothos for cover and drinking surface. Leaf litter holds floor humidity and hides feeder insects. Bare glass produces a stressed lizard with nowhere to go.

06

Feeding: Small Prey, Often

This is an insectivore that eats on a short clock. Offer crickets and fruit flies every 1–2 days, sized to the lizard and not the shopping list; a 5–8 inch anole takes small feeders, and hatchlings live on flightless fruit flies. They hunt by movement, so live prey only. Gut-load first, then dust with plain calcium, no D3 or phosphorus, at most feedings; multivitamin weekly while growing, twice monthly for adults. An anole that eats well and stays thin needs a fecal test, not more crickets.

07

Health Red Flags

A lizard this small has no reserves, so a bad week is already an emergency. Learn the normal: bright eyes, a tight grip on the branch, an animal up on its perch by mid-morning. The warning signs are a body that stays on the floor all day, eyes shut while the lights are on, wrinkled or tented skin, tremors, and a jaw or limbs that look rubbery. Any of those, especially the rubbery jaw, means a reptile vet now, not after another week of watching.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.