



Dumeril's Monitors

Varanus dumerilii

ADVANCED • 3–5 FT ADULT • 15–20 YR LIFESPAN • DIURNAL • SOUTHEAST ASIA

A mangrove lizard that spends its life between water, mud and branches. Dumeril's monitors are sharp, fast-learning animals from Southeast Asia's rainforests and tidal swamps, and they can tame down with patience. What they will not do is shrink. The honest headline: an adult needs a room-sized, hot, wet enclosure that most keepers underestimate, which is why this is an advanced animal and not a first lizard.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient temp	80–85 °F
Basking spot	110–130 °F
Night temp	75–80 °F
Humidity	70–90%
UVB	Recommended
Diet	Crabs, snails, mice, eggs
Feeding	Every 3–5 days
Adult size	3–5 feet
Lifespan	15–20 years



Dumeril's monitors are mangrove animals, semi-arboreal and at home in water. Ask for captive-bred stock at NARBC shows.

Photo: Ian Dugdale / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Temperament & Handling

Dumeril's monitors are shy where other monitors are bold. A frightened one runs for water or a hollow, and it can bite and claw hard when cornered. With patient, low-pressure daily work most captive-bred animals settle into something calm and genuinely interactive, but that is earned over months, not bought. Grabbing and holding sets you back. Let the animal come to you, feed it on tongs, and accept that a bad day means hands off.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Nothing about this animal fits a rack, at any age. Hatchlings start at 36×18×24; an adult needs 96×48×48 as a floor and 120×48×60 if you have the room. Footprint comes before height: a Dumeril's climbs, but it forages on the ground, so give it both. Keep one monitor per enclosure, since they compete over heat and food and the loser is injured or simply starves. Build the cage first. Retrofitting a five-foot lizard into a tank you already own is how these get rehomed.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	36×18×24	48×24×36	Vibrant orange-and-black juvenile coloration fades with age.
Juvenile	48×24×36	72×30×48	Needs a water feature big enough to soak in.
Subadult	72×36×48	96×36×48	A crustacean specialist in the wild; takes rodents readily in captivity.
Adult	96×48×48	120×48×60	Semi-arboreal: climbing structure AND floor space, plus a big water feature.

Enclosure sizes in inches, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. No stage of this animal belongs in a rack.

03

Heat, Basking and UVB

This is a hot-basking lizard on a steep gradient. Ambient air sits at 80–85 °F, with a basking surface of 110–130 °F measured where the animal actually lies, not in the air above it. Nights fall to 75–80 °F. Use overhead halogen floods aimed at stacked stone or slate, never a heat rock; belly heat cannot warm a body this deep, and cork scorches under a lamp this hot. UVB is recommended, so run a linear tube over the basking end and let the animal choose its dose.

04

Humidity & Water

Habitat-OS puts this species at 70–90% humidity, with adults settling into the 70–80% part of that band. For a mangrove animal that is not a suggestion. **Hot and humid are not opposites here; a Dumeril's needs both at once.** Hold it with deep, damp substrate in a solid-sided enclosure that still moves air, not constant misting, which spikes and crashes. Standing water at every age, and from juvenile on a pool the animal can climb into and soak in. Change it the day it fouls.

05

Substrate, Cover and Enrichment

Go deep. A thick, moisture-holding mix of topsoil and cypress or coco chip holds humidity, holds a burrow and gives the monitor somewhere to disappear. Skip loose sand entirely, especially for young animals. Add cork rounds, sturdy branches and a hide at both the hot and cool ends; a monitor that cannot get out of sight will not settle. For enrichment, hide food, bury it, float it. This is a problem-solving lizard, and a bored one paces the glass.

06

Feeding

In the mangroves this is a crustacean specialist, and crabs and snails still belong on the menu: shell is where the calcium is. In captivity they take mice, whole eggs and other whole prey readily, on a schedule of every 3–5 days. Feed on tongs or in a dish so hands never smell like food. The classic mistake is a rodent-only diet fed to a lizard that barely moves; vary the prey, keep the animal working for it, and watch the body, not the bowl.

07

Health Red Flags

Stringy saliva, cheesy yellow matter at the gum line or a swollen jaw is stomatitis, and it hides for weeks. Wheezing, open-mouth breathing or bubbles at the nostrils is respiratory infection: suspect cold or stagnant air, not the humidity it needs. Sunken eyes, tented skin and stuck shed on toes and tail tip mean dehydration. Any of those is a reptile-vet visit, not a wait. Weigh monthly and log it. A monitor hides illness until hiding stops working.

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.