



Frilled Dragons

Chlamydosaurus kingii

INTERMEDIATE · 2–3 FT ADULT · 10–20 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · AUSTRALIA & NEW GUINEA

Few lizards make a first impression like this one. Fold-out neck frill, upright sprint, a face built for theater. Frilled dragons are diurnal, largely arboreal agamids from the woodlands of northern Australia and New Guinea, and the honest headline is this: they are not a bearded dragon in a taller box. They are nervier, more fragile, and they punish a rushed setup.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Intermediate
Adult size	2–3 ft total length
Lifespan	10–20 years
Ambient temp	78–88 °F
Basking surface	95–105 °F
Night low	70–75 °F
Humidity	50–70%
UVB	Required, from day one
Diet	Insects, live and gut-loaded



Frilled dragons pull a crowd at every NARBC show. Ask about feeding history before you buy: appetite is the first thing to slip here.

Photo: Habitat-OS

01

The Frill Is a Bluff

Gaping mouth, hissing, the whole umbrella snapped open, then a two-legged sprint for the nearest trunk. None of that is confidence. It is a stress signal, and a dragon provoked into it again and again is a dragon that stops eating. Handling is something they tolerate, never something they enjoy. Keep sessions short, support the body, and let the animal come to you. This is an intermediate lizard, and the reason is nerves.

02

Housing: Build Up, Not Out

Think height. Every stage in the table below wants a vertical enclosure with real climbing structure: cork rounds, angled branches, leaf cover to disappear behind. Nothing in this animal's life is served by a rack. Minimums run from 24×18×24 for hatchlings to 48×24×60 for adults, and 60×30×72 is the space a grown dragon actually uses. House one to an enclosure. Males fight, and any pair competes for the basking branch until the loser quietly stops eating.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	24×18×24	36×18×36	Nervous. Visual barriers around the glass, and strong UVB from day one.
Juvenile	36×18×36	48×24×48	Dehydrates easily. Run a dripper or mist heavily.
Subadult	48×24×48	48×24×60	Stress becomes refused food here. Keep traffic and handling to a minimum.
Adult	48×24×60	60×30×72	Arboreal: height and climbing branches matter more than floor space.

Minimum and preferred enclosure sizes in inches from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance; every stage is vertical, and none is a rack.

03

Heat, Light & UVB

Frilled dragons bask hard and high. Put the hot spot on a broad branch near the roof, 95–105 °F measured on the perch itself, with ambient air at 78–88 °F and a genuine cool end to retreat to. Nights fall to 70–75 °F with the lights off. **UVB is not optional here: a growing frilled dragon without it develops metabolic bone disease, and the deformities it leaves are permanent.** Run a linear tube from day one, above the mesh: glass blocks UVB completely, mesh cuts it by a quarter to a half.

04

Humidity and Hydration

Hold 50–70%, and how you deliver it matters more than the number. These lizards drink moving water: droplets running off leaves, a dripper working over a branch, a heavy morning mist that beads on the foliage. Plenty of them ignore a still bowl completely, so offer one but never count on it. Let the enclosure dry back between mistings. Permanent swamp in a tall screen cage buys respiratory trouble, not hydration.

05

Substrate and Furnishings

Start young dragons on a solid, non-particulate floor, paper towel or smooth liner, while their aim at moving prey is still poor. This species has a sensitive gut, and loose grain is a risk it does not need. Adults do well on a deep, soil-based mix, packed down and topped with leaf litter. Above the floor is where the enclosure earns its keep: cork slabs, sturdy branches at several heights, dense cover to vanish into. A heat rock is not furniture; it is a burn waiting to happen.

06

Feeding

Live insects, gut-loaded, and dusted: plain calcium, no D3 and no phosphorus, at most feedings, plus a reptile multivitamin weekly while growing and twice monthly as adults. The UVB supplies the D3, so never stack a D3 calcium on top. Crickets, roaches, hornworms and silkworms all belong in the rotation. Size prey to the head, not the appetite, and pull anything uneaten before dark: loose crickets chew on a sleeping lizard. Growing dragons eat more often than adults. Appetite is your dashboard.

07

Health Red Flags

Appetite and weight are the early warning system. A dragon that skips meals, sits low and dark instead of basking, or passes loose, foul or undigested stool is showing the gut trouble this species is prone to. Dehydration shows up as sunken eyes and skin that holds a crease when pinched. Trembling limbs, a soft jaw or a wobbly climb mean the UVB and calcium side has failed. Any of those signs is a reptile vet visit, not a wait-and-see.

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.