



Knight Anoles

Anolis equestris

INTERMEDIATE · 13–20 IN ADULT · 6–10 YR LIFESPAN · DIURNAL · ARBOREAL · CUBA

Anoles have a reputation as small, cheap starter lizards. The knight anole never got the memo. This is the giant of the genus, a Cuban canopy lizard that reaches twenty inches nose to tail and behaves like it owns the tree. Territorial, quick to gape, and genuinely willing to bite. Keep one for what it is: a spectacular display animal you watch through glass, not a pet you carry around. Not a first lizard, either.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient temp	75–85 °F
Basking spot	88–95 °F
Night temp	70–75 °F
Humidity	70–80%
UVB	5.0 required (T5), 10–14 in
Diet	Large insects; pinky as a treat
Feeding cadence	Every 1–2 days
Adult size	13–20 inches
Lifespan	6–10 years



The largest anole in the hobby, and a display animal first: worth a long look at NARBC, not a lizard to pass hand to hand.

Photo: Habitat-OS (AI-edited)

01

A Lizard You Watch, Not Hold

Knight anoles are bold, territorial and not interested in being handled. Crowd one and it turns to face you, flares its dewlap, gapes, and follows through. The bite breaks skin, and they hold on. Handle only for health checks and moves, briefly. Territory is the other half: **keep one knight anole per enclosure, at every age**. Two adults in one cage means bitten toes, dropped tails, and a loser that quits eating. Nothing smaller shares the cage either; they eat other lizards.

02

Housing: Build Up, Not Out

This is a canopy lizard, so height is the axis that matters. A hatchling starts at 12×12×18 and an adult needs 24×24×48 at minimum, with 36×24×48 the size that actually looks right. Racks are not an option at any stage. Give the top third of the cage real structure: branches of varying diameter, cork rounds, and broad leaves to break sight lines, so the animal can climb above eye level and settle. A front-opening cage saves you reaching down over a defensive lizard.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	12×12×18	18×18×24	Bigger than other anole hatchlings; start on the larger setup.
Juvenile	18×18×24	24×18×36	Fast growth: near adult size by 18 months. Plan the upgrade early.
Subadult	24×18×36	24×24×48	Defensive by now. Handle rarely; the bite is powerful.
Adult	24×24×48	36×24×48	Largest anole. Height beats floor space, with the T5 UVB 10–14 in above the perch.

Minimums and preferred sizes from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Every stage is vertical, and no knight anole belongs in a rack.

03

Heat, Light & UVB

Run 75–85 °F ambient with a basking branch at 88–95 °F, and let nights drop to 70–75 °F. UVB is required, not a nice extra: a 5.0 lamp, and a T5 HO tube for adults, above the mesh. In a cage four feet tall, distance is everything. Set the top basking perch 10 to 14 inches below the tube, never closer than 10, which lands the basking spot at UVI 2 to 3. Mesh cuts output by a quarter to a half; glass and plastic block it outright. Overhead heat only, on a dimming thermostat, and no heat rocks.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity around 70–80%, with a wet morning and a drier afternoon rather than a permanently soggy cage. Stagnant damp air causes more trouble than a dry hour ever will. Knight anoles drink droplets off leaves and glass, and most ignore a still bowl entirely, so mist heavily twice a day or run a misting system on a timer. Keep a bowl anyway, keep it clean, and set the hygrometer at perch height where the lizard actually lives.

05

Substrate & Furnishing

A deep organic mix (topsoil and coco fiber) under a layer of leaf litter holds moisture and feeds live plants. Skip loose sand at any age. Plant heavily, and plant sturdy: pothos, ficus and bromeliads carry the weight of a big lizard; delicate stems do not. Add branches thick enough to grip, angled diagonally, plus cork tubes and broad leaves for cover. A knight anole that can get out of sight when it wants to is a knight anole that gapes at you less.

06

Feeding a Big Insect Hunter

Feed every one to two days. Large insects carry the diet: dubia, crickets, hornworms and silkworms, gut-loaded and dusted at most feedings with plain calcium, no D3 and no phosphorus. With the UVB working, a reptile multivitamin is the only D3 they need: weekly while growing, twice a month for adults. In the wild they take smaller lizards as well, so a pinky mouse is a fair occasional item for an adult, never a staple. They hunt by sight from above and lunge at the tongs, so use long ones.

07

Health Red Flags

A knight anole gapes when it's angry. Open-mouth breathing when nothing is bothering it is different, and with mucus or clicking it means a vet. The bigger risk is metabolic bone disease: weak grip, tremors, a rubbery jaw, or a lizard that stops climbing and sits on the floor. That is a UVB and calcium failure, and it moves fast in a growing animal. Sunken eyes, wrinkled skin and stuck shed on the toes mean dehydration. Any of it, see a reptile vet.

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.