

Meller's Chameleon Care

Why is the Meller's Chameleon so difficult to take care of?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

I saw several beautiful adult Meller's chameleons at a recent herp show, but experienced herpers talked me out of buying one. Why?

While adult Meller's chameleons (*Chamaeleo melleri*) are beautiful, they are more difficult to maintain than some of the other species of chameleons that are more hardy and easier to keep.

Many adult chameleons, especially the imported ones, are often harboring a significant parasite load. Deworming them requires great care. If they have any filarid worms in the subcutaneous tissues, it can be dangerous, even life threatening, to kill all of the subcutaneous worms at one time. This can cause an anaphylactic reaction that can result in the death of the chameleon. It is often safer to perform surgery to remove any worms discovered in the subcutis, rather than to use a medical dewormer.

Intestinal parasites can also be a big problem in adult imported chameleons. Worms and protozoal infections can result in secondary bacterial infections in the intestines and can generally debilitate already stressed animals.

The adult size of the Meller's chameleon is approximately 28 inches in length, and because of their extremely large size, they require a very large habitat or perhaps an entire room. Their POTZ is 77 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit, which should be easy for a herper to provide. The biggest problem with maintaining these chameleons is that they require an ambient humidity of 95 to 100 percent, which is almost impossible to maintain without humidifiers, misters and specialized enclosures to hold the humidity. Meller's chameleons also require a constant source of fresh water from a drip system or mister and will quickly fail to thrive unless kept well hydrated on a daily basis.

Other types of chameleon will usually not decline if not provided with proper humidity and fresh water continually for a few days (not that this is ever recommended), but it doesn't take long for a Meller's to go downhill if the owner doesn't stay on top of this all the time. This is probably the main reason why your herper friends tried to dissuade you from purchasing a Meller's. I'm glad you listened, as there are many other types of chameleon that don't have such specific and difficult to maintain requirements.

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