

ANIMAL

ANOLE LIZARD

INTRODUCTION

The most commonly kept and widespread of all species of Anolis indigenous to the southern United States, has been popular in the pet trade since the 1950s. An anole is an agile climber and acute visual hunter of spiders, grasshoppers and other insect prey. Anoles are personable little lizards that seem to enjoy being hand-fed, and they can make great “starter” reptiles for young and beginning hobbyists. That said, they do have some specialized care requirements.

WATER

Wild anoles typically lap water from leaves after a rain shower, or before the sun dries an early-morning dew. Some pets may drink standing water from a shallow dish, but all anoles will drink water misted onto the leaves and walls of their terrarium. If you do opt to provide a water dish, be sure it's shallow; green anoles cannot escape from deep or steep-walled water dishes and will quickly drown in deep water. Placing a stick or vine in the water dish will ensure your green anoles an escape route should one be necessary.

FEEDING

Anoles will eat small invertebrates such as crickets, mealworms, farm-raised maggots, roaches (genus Blaptica), and all other insect fare. Avoid superworms or kingworms, as these possess sharp, powerful mandibles that can injure your anole. Wild-caught insects, such as grasshoppers and leafhoppers, make great supplements to your anole's diet, but make certain that any and all wild insects offered to your pets are free of pesticides, herbicides and any other dangerous agricultural chemical.

HOUSING

Vertically oriented terrariums are preferable, as taller enclosures better accommodate the arboreal anole's needs. Air circulation is important, so a well-ventilated terrarium is recommended. Vertically oriented vegetative cover is an absolute necessity; acrylic vines, plastic plants that adhere to the tank walls by way of suction cups and other such cover are highly recommended. Anoles will sooner take refuge in suspended tangles of vegetation rather than in ground-level hides or caves.

BEHAVIOR

Anoles tolerate gentle handling, and they will usually prefer to perch upon a keeper's hand or shoulder, rather than be tightly gripped. They are fragile lizards, and their tails will break easily, so while they do tolerate gentle interaction with their keepers, it's best to keep handling to a minimum. Newly acquired anoles should not be handled soon after purchase; give your new pets a week or two to adapt to their new surroundings before handling them. Children should be supervised whenever handling green anoles, and anyone who handles them (or any other reptiles) should always wash their hands with antibacterial soap afterward.

