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**Species Information** Origin, Habitat, and Habits Captive Housing Diet Health Signs of Stress Sexing Reproduction Temperament Behavior/Communication A Note For Parents... TIGR Reptile Database Species The Green anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) is the only anole native to the U.S.; to 9" snout-vent length (stl). Other species commonly available in the pet trade or found in the wild: A. equestris (Cuban, or Knight; anole; to 20" stl); A. garmani (Jamaican Giant; or crested) anole; to 11" stl); A. sagrei (Brown anole; to 9" stl); A. cybotes (Bighead anole; to 8" stl); A. disticus (Bark anole; to 5" stl); A. cristatellus (Puerto Rican crested anole; to 7" stl) For a complete list of species and links to photos, see the TIGR Database listing for Polychrotidae Anoles are sometimes called "chameleons." This is due to their color-changing ability of the green anoles, especially, who when severely stressed or kept in poor tank dark brown. They are not true chameleons, species of lizards who look very different than anoles and come from different parts of the world. If your green anole is always brown, it is a sign of stress. Origin, Habitat And Habits Found in Southeastern USA, Cuba, Jamaica, and other Caribbean islands. Only the green anole is native to the U.S.; all others are released or escaped pets, many of which have survived and bred in the U.S.; the other six species are native to the Caribbean islands. The vast majority of green anoles sold in the pet trade are wild caught in the Southeastern U.S. There are over 36 species of non-native anoles breeding in the wilds in Florida (out of an estimated total of 250 anole species in the world), and there has been considerable interbreeding so markings may be considerably altered from the true wild types. Habitat Found in bushes, trees (not above 15'), in and on rock walls, woods, around houses. Habits Primarily terrestrial, these diurnal lizards inhabit low bushes and the ground underneath. Often found sunning on exposed walls and branches. DIRT Wild diet includes grubs, crickets, cockroaches, spiders, moths, any arthropod which will fit in their mouths. In captivity, avoid "cowboys" (aka potato bugs and grass hoppers). Even though adult males can digest larger prey, the adults they should be no bigger than 1/2 the size of the enclosure. Cockroach Housings, male smallish, yellowish, and grayish. Cockroach Housings, male smallish, yellowish, and grayish. Minimum tank size for a group of two adult anoles must be a tall 10 gallon tank. Three or four (one male and up to three females) anoles may be kept in a 20 gallon tetra aquarium (48" x 24" x 12"). The more lizards there are, the more hiding places and basking areas needed, so tanks must get corresponding large. Minimum Requirements: Despite their relatively inexpensive price tag, anoles are not "cheap lizards". The basic captive environment requires: 1 Vitalite (or other UVB-producing fluorescent) - 12-14 hours a day 1 basking light 1 nocturnal heat light, as needed to maintain night time temperatures 1 undertank heating pad (human heating pads are appropriate) 2 thermometers (cool end and warm end; ideally, a third should be placed in the basking) Sterile peat moss potting soil over 1 inch of pea gravel, OR 1-2 inches of potting soil covered with bark mulch Several 2 inch potted plants - helps maintain humidity and provide cover and shade from the UV and basking lights (Sansevierias are good, as are bromeliads, philodendrons, ivies, orchids and vines and groundcovers) Logs or branches for basking (essential for arboreal lizards!) Not appropriate for anoles: hot rocks heat tapes heated caves sand or gravel substrates Temperatures Basking area: 85-90 F available in daytime only Overall thermal gradient: 75-80 F days, 65-75 F night Humidity and Water The ambient enclosure humidity should be maintained around 60-70%...humid but not wet rainforest conditions. Spray plants with purified water (tap water causes hard water spots on plants and glass) a couple times a day, or set up a drifter or mist system. In the wild, anoles lap off leaves. In captivity, you cannot assume that they will figure out how to take a water bowl, so you will need to spray their leaves for them. Some anoles do learn to drink from bowls: you can aid this learning process by setting up a dripper bottle to drip water onto a shallow bowl. In the sight and sound of dripping, splashing water which attracts their attention. Drive The anole's captive care should be as close to their wild diet as possible, avoid potato bugs, small crickets and mealworms. As with most reptiles, the adults they should be no bigger than 1/2 the size of the enclosure. Wild-caught anoles are best kept accepted as pets. Measure the insects collected from pest control free area and not heavily infested areas with auto exhaust particulates. Stay away from bugs you are not certain of, and ones known to be toxic, such as fireflies. Feed anoles daily, letting them have as much as they will eat. If crickets are left uneaten in the enclosure, be sure to provide them with proper cricket food and moisture - otherwise, they will eat whatever is handy; your anoles! Prey insects need to be cared for properly to provide the most nutrition for your lizards. If you cannot find the right size for your lizard, you can order them through the mail from one of the many companies that breed and supply these food items. Gut-loaded freshly molted crickets and mealworms, every other day - usually 2-3 appropriately sized food items per feeding is fine. If any food is left in the tank, food for the prey MUST be provided. Gut-load 24-48 hours on tropical fish flakes, high protein dry baby cereal, reptile vitamins and fruit. Foods appropriate for gut-loading include tropical fish flakes; high protein baby cereal mixed with reptile vitamins; ground monkey chow mixed with calcium supplement. Provide moisture by placing pieces of carrots, apple, orange, etc., in the cricket enclosure. Dehydration is the biggest cause of cannibalism in insects. Temperament Some anoles may become comfortable with being gently handled. On the whole, however, handling is very stressful to them, and stress will cause them to become ill. Initially, however, all anoles will try to run from you when you go to pick them up and may bite...and they have quite strong bites for being such small, delicate creatures! Biting, as much as it may hurt you, may be more dangerous for them if you jerk your hand away - this can break their jaws or cause teeth to be ripped out. So, handle them as little as possible, and don't let them bite you. If you get bit - put back in their enclosure so that they feel secure that they won't harm you. That will get them to release you. They will get their tails if grabbed there (this is called autotomy). Their fragile toes can be broken or injured if removed unaidedly from your clothing. Health Issues Since they are primarily wild caught lizards, highly stressed from the capture and the deprivations and often inhumane conditions of the pet trade, they are generally dehydrated, moderately to severely emaciated, and ridden with parasites - just like most reptiles sold in this country every year. A dehydrated reptile will not eat, or will not eat very much, as digestion requires considerable quantities of fluids. All new reptiles should be tested for internal parasites and checked carefully visually for external parasites, so find a reptile vet before, or right after, you get your anole. If there are any significant folds of skin, or the eyes are sunken, the lizard is dehydrated. If 24 hours of higher than normal humidity does not resolve it, the anole should be taken to a vet to be assessed for other methods of fluid administration. Persistent black spots behind the eyes on the head may be an indication that your anole is seriously ill. (See Behavior/Communication above.) Anoles, when heated, litged, fed and housed properly, are fairly hardy lizards. Depending upon the age they are when they are caught/bought, the older ones may not settle in as well as the younger ones. Remember: to them, you look like a giant predator. They are not as intelligent as many of the much larger lizards so you must be patient and understand that you may end up with some beautiful lizards in a lush, beautiful environment (lots of plants, bark slabs for hiding places, etc.) rather than a lizard who will tolerate a lot of handling and social interaction. Signs of Stress When a green anole turns brown, it is a sign of severe stress. Stressed anoles may turn green at night when their lights are out and they are asleep, but will turn brown again once they wake up and start the new day. The bark slabs for hiding places, etc.) rather than a lizard who will tolerate a lot of handling and social interaction. Signs of Stress When a green anole turns brown, it is a sign of severe stress. Stressed anoles may turn green at night when their lights are out and they are asleep, but will turn brown again once they wake up and start the new day. 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