

Female Panther Chameleon care sheet

Egg Laying & Breeding

Panther chameleons do not need to be mated or even have seen a male to develop eggs. Like chickens they will lay infertile clutches of eggs periodically. Even if you only have a single female chameleon you've had since she was a baby it will be critical to provide her it's a place to lay eggs because egg binding (being unable to lay eggs) is fatal. Panther chameleons can start to develop eggs as early as 6-7 months of age. It is highly recommended to not breed your chameleon until the female is at least a year of age and 65g in weight so she is mature and can dedicate calcium stores to eggs instead of stripping it from her own growing bones. A gravid female will often display a darker body color with pink or orange patches. A clutch can contain on average 20-70 eggs and fertile or infertile makes no difference on size of clutch or whether the female will have trouble laying them. Females can lay 1-3 _clutches on average per year, during any season. A single breeding may produce several clutches from the same pairing due to sperm retention by the female. Egg laying is a big strain on the female's body and heavy breeding can shorten life span. Extra calcium should be given to gravid females to keep up with the need of making eggshells. A female that is unable to lay her eggs for environmental, nutritional or medical reasons causes a serious condition of egg-binding or being egg-bound. This is a medical emergency and will be fatal if not treated. Over feeding can cause complications with egg laying and larger clutch sizes, making them more prone to becoming egg-bound.

A female over 6 months of age should always have a laying bin available. The laying bin should be at least 12x12x12" with depth being crucial. The egg laying substrate should be either

washed play sand or a mixture of washed play sand and organic soil moistened so that a tunnel retains its shape and does not collapse. There should be one or several branches going into the laying bin so that the female can crawl in and out as desired. A female about to lay eggs will often become restless, pace her cage and make decrease or stop eating in the week before. Once a female enters the laying bin she may dig several test holes before choosing to lay eggs. They dig head first to make the tunnel and then back into the tunnel to lay their eggs before covering the tunnel completely. It is **absolutely critical** to give a chameleon complete privacy while she is in the laying bin. If she is disturbed, she may abandon her tunnel and could become egg-bound. The cage may need to be wrapped with a sheet with only a peep hole to keep disruptions out of sight. It can take several hours up to several days to lay eggs. A female that is weak, very uncomfortable, or refuses to use a laying bin may need veterinary assistance immediately. After a female lays eggs it is very important to give her at least a week of minimal stress, increased hydration and calcium-rich food to recuperate.

Egg Incubation

The fertile eggs should be removed from where they were laid in the exact position they were laid in (do not turn) and half buried in the incubation substrate in a Tupperware container with no holes or only a few very small holes in the lid. Eggs are incubated in coarse vermiculite or 'hatchrite' moistened to the point that only there are only a few drops of water when a handful of the substrate is squeezed. Seal the lid completely to retain moisture or the eggs will dry out and not survive. Depending on the temperatures of your home Panther eggs can be placed in a dark cabinet for incubation rather than using an actual incubator. Panther chameleon eggs take on average 7-12 months to hatch when kept at temperatures of 68-76F.