

Anole (American Chameleon) Care Guide



Background

Green anoles are also known as “American Chameleons” because of their ability to change colors from brilliant greens to shades of brown. They are relatively hardy, inexpensive to obtain, diurnal and quite docile. These features makes them a favorite pet and an ideal addition to any classroom. Anoles are native to the southeastern United States, ranging from the gulf coast states to Oklahoma. In the wild, they occupy habitats of bushes, trees less than 15 feet tall and rock walls or woods around houses. Anoles are strict insectivores and feed on crickets, grasshoppers, grubs, spiders and moths. Males can be territorial and should not be housed with other males. The average life span of an anole is three to five years, but with excellent care and nutrition, seven to ten years is common.

Safety Precautions

Always treat live organisms with respect and proper care. For student and green anole safety, handling should be minimal. Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling.

Habitat

Enclosure

1. Glass aquariums serve as ideal enclosures for anoles. The size required depends on the number of anoles present. A 10-gallon aquarium is sufficient for one to two anoles while a 20-gallon aquarium is ideal for three to six anoles.
2. Create multiple basking spots and cooling areas within the enclosure to minimize stress among the anoles. Do not include more than one male per enclosure.
3. Secure a screen lid on top of the aquarium to provide ventilation and prevent escape.
4. Anoles are arboreal, tree dwellers and seek refuge in suspended vegetation. Provide vertical pieces of driftwood, grapevines or artificial vines that can be mounted to the aquarium using suction cups.
5. Place the aquarium enclosure on a shelf or counter where it will not be regularly disrupted. Areas with heavy foot traffic will cause stress to the anoles.
6. Live plants are an excellent addition to the enclosure. They offer humidity as well as natural hiding places. Safe options include *Sansevierias*, bromeliads, philodendrons, ivy, orchids, vines or ground cover.

Substrate

1. Cover the entire floor of the enclosure with untreated soil. Then cover with a mixture of reptile bark and leaf litter. Another option is pea gravel covered with one to two inches of peat moss. Avoid oily, resinous or scented substrates, pine or any type of wood shavings, scented paper towels and excessively dry substrates like sand.
2. Pour the substrate so it is two to four inches deep. This will give rooting space for live plants as well.
3. Ground hiding places can be offered, but are not necessary.

Moisture

1. Place a shallow water bowl on the floor of the enclosure. Tall bowls/pools are to be avoided because anoles are not agile swimmers and will be unable to escape, causing them to drown in the water bowl. Placing a secure stick or vine in the water provides an excellent escape route for the anole.
2. Water must be changed daily with chlorine and chloramine-free water.

3. Mist the enclosure once or twice daily. Anoles in the wild will drink water from leaves after a rain shower or early morning dew. Be sure to mist the leaves of the plants, the walls of the enclosure and the anoles.
4. Maintain the humidity between 60–70%. Live plants and misting will ensure there is enough moisture for the anole.

Temperature and Lighting

1. Maintain the basking area temperature between 85–90 °F. This can be achieved by placing the heating lamp directly over the basking spot. Make sure there are branches or grapevines underneath the heat lamp to allow the anoles the opportunity to reach the basking area.
2. Maintain a cool area (70–75 °F) so the anole can escape the heat and its body temperature can decrease. The cool area is also the correct location for the water bowl.
 - a. In a long aquarium, one side should be a designated basking area and the other side a designated cool area.
 - b. In a tall aquarium, set up the top portion as a designated basking area and the ground/floor as the cool area.
5. A 50–75 watt bulb maintains the proper basking area temperature. Use an incandescent bulb during the day and an infrared bulb at night.
6. An ultraviolet light, full spectrum UVA and UVB is required for all reptiles. The light needs to be on 10–12 hours per day to allow the anole to metabolize and synthesize vitamin D3.

Nutrition/Feeding

1. Anoles are strict insectivores. Do not feed them vegetables.
2. Feed anoles daily. Crickets are the main staple in an anoles diet. The crickets must be gut loaded 24–48 hours prior to being fed to the anoles. Crickets can be gut loaded by feeding them tropical fish flakes, high protein, dry baby cereal or fruit. Crickets should also be dusted weekly with calcium and vitamin supplements prior to being fed to the anoles.
3. Anoles may also be fed mealworm and wax worms occasionally. Anoles are not to be fed superworms or kingworms. These insects have very strong mandibles that can harm the anole if bitten.
4. Do not overfeed your anole; excess crickets will nibble on your reptiles. If there are too many crickets in the enclosure, be sure to provide the crickets with food to prevent harm to the anoles. Place fruit slices, vegetable peels or oatmeal in the enclosure. Be sure to remove uneaten food prior to molding.

Handling

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling.
2. Minimize handling of anoles. This process is extremely stressful as they are nervous and jumpy by nature. With proper handling, they may become content hanging on a finger or shirt without running away for safety.
3. Proper handling techniques:
 - a. Approach slowly in a gentle manner, do not make sudden movements.
 - b. Do not approach from above, place hands on either side of the body and cup the anole into your hands supporting the belly.
 - c. Using your thumb and index finger, you can hold the head and keep the jaw from opening.
 - d. Never grab the anole by the tail, it will perceive this as a threat and “drop” its tail, which means it breaks off.

Disposal

Deceased anoles may be disposed of according to Flinn Suggested Biological Waste Disposal Method Type IV. Please consult your current *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* for proper disposal procedure. Never release live organisms into the local environment. They may harbor pathogens that could decimate the local population or become invasive.

Tips

- Prevent illness by practicing proper cage maintenance:
 - a. Change water daily.
 - b. Mist the enclosure daily, including plants, walls and anoles.
 - c. Scoop waste from substrate daily.
 - d. Remove anoles and wash artificial décor weekly using a 10% dilute bleach solution and rinse thoroughly.
- Do not overcrowd the anoles—there must be plenty of hiding and basking spots for all reptiles.
- Minimize the number of males housed together, ideally one male per enclosure is best.
- Vitamin and calcium deficiencies can be avoided by dusting crickets once per week prior to feeding.

References

Animal-World. www.animal-world.com/encyclo/reptiles/lizards_iguanid/GreenAnole.php (Accessed February, 2017).

Reptiles Magazine. www.reptilesmagazine.com/care-sheets/Green-Anole/ (Accessed February, 2017).

Melissa Kaplan's Her Care Collection. www.anapsid.org/anole.html (Accessed February, 2017).

Materials for *Anole (American Chameleon) Care Guide* are available from Flinn Scientific, Inc.

Catalog No.	Description
LM1169	Anoles (American Chameleon), Live, Pkg. of 3
FB0211	Aquarium, All-Glass, 10 gal.
FB0212	Aquarium, All-Glass, 20 gal. (High)
FB0283	Aquarium Screen Cover with Door (10-gallon)
FB0284	Aquarium Screen Cover with Door (20-gallon high)
FB0261	Aquarium Gravel, 5 lb bag
FB0585	Peat Moss
FB1352	Nature Bed, Compressed Bedding
LM1164	Crickets, Live 50
LM1112	Mealworms, Live 30

Consult your *Flinn Scientific Catalog/Reference Manual* for current prices.