



Ackie Monitor (*Varanus acanthurus*) Care Guide

Presented by Shikito's Critters

Congratulations on your new Ackie Monitor! These Australian natives are widely considered the "perfect" monitor lizard due to their manageable size, prehistoric appearance, and inquisitive intelligence. With the right setup, they can live for 15–20 years.

This guide outlines the essentials to keep your Ackie healthy and thriving.



1. ENCLOSURE & HOUSING

Ackies are active, high-energy lizards that require ample space. Do not underestimate their need for floor space and digging depth.

- **Minimum Size:** For a juvenile, a 60-90cm long enclosure would be ideal. For a single adult, a 120cm x 60cm x 60cm (4ft x 2ft x 2ft) enclosure is the absolute minimum. Larger is always better (e.g., 150cm or 180cm long). **We keep our pair in a 6ft x 2ft x 2ft enclosure.**



Terrible photo, but you can see all the climbing areas and basking spot

- **Material:** Wooden/PVC/Melamine enclosures are superior to glass tanks as they hold heat and humidity much better, which is crucial for Australian monitors. A glass enclosure is fine for a young ackie though as it's temporary.
- **Security:** Ackies are master escape artists. Ensure all vents are secure and sliding glass doors have a lock.
- **3D Backgrounds:** 3D backgrounds are fantastic for adding more usable space in an enclosure. Just make sure they are firmly secured to the enclosure, otherwise the ackie will try and go behind it. I use silicone to secure the background and use expanding foam to fill in any gaps.

2. HEATING & TEMPERATURE

Ackies require a massive temperature gradient. They are sun-worshippers that need extreme heat to digest food, but they must be able to retreat to a cool zone.

- **Basking Surface Temperature:** You need a hot spot with a surface temperature of **40-50 degrees celsius**. This is measured with an infrared temp gun, not a wall thermometer.
- **Cool Side:** The cool end should drop to **around 26 degrees celsius**. This gradient allows them to thermoregulate effectively.
- **Night Temps:** No light at night. Temperatures can safely drop to **18-20 degrees Celsius**. If your house gets colder than that, use a Ceramic Heat Emitter (CHE) on a thermostat.
- **Heat lights we use and recommend:** Reptile One Daylight heat lamps, Flood lamps and Radiant heat lights. Radiant heat lights don't emit light, so they are good for 24/7 heating.



- **Thermostats:** With any heating item, you **NEED** a thermostat. Its not optional, it's a necessity! We use **Inkbird Temperature Controller ITC-308-Wifi** Thermostats. They are the best ones we've used. I use these on all sorts of enclosures. You can connect them to your phone and monitor/change temps on the app!

Pro Tip: Use a "Retes Stack." This is a stack of flat rocks or tiles with spacers in between, placed directly under the heat lamp. It allows the monitor to choose exactly how close to the heat they want to be while feeling secure in a tight crevice.



Inkbird Temperature Controller ITC-308-WIFI

3. LIGHTING (UVB)

Ackies are diurnal (active during the day) and require UVB to metabolize calcium and prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD).

- **UVB Source:** Use a T5 HO (High Output) linear UVB tube (typically 10% or 12% UVB, such as Arcadia T5 12% Desert).
- **Placement:** The tube should cover 1/2 to 2/3 of the enclosure length and be mounted on the ceiling on the same side as the heat lamp.

- **Replacement:** UVB bulbs degrade over time even if they light up. Replace them every **6–12 months** depending on the brand.

4. SUBSTRATE & DECOR

In the wild, Ackies live in rock crevices and burrows. They love to dig.

- **Substrate Depth:** Provide a minimum of **15cm – 30cm** of substrate.
- **Mix:** A mixture of organic topsoil and play sand (approx. 60/40 or 70/30 mix) works best. It needs to be moist enough to hold a burrow (like sandcastle consistency).
- **Decor:** Provide sturdy branches for climbing and rocks for basking. Cork bark flats and hollow logs make excellent hides.

5. HUMIDITY & HYDRATION

While they are desert animals, their burrows are humid

- **Humidity:** Ambient humidity can be 40–50%, but the substrate layer (the burrow zone) should be higher (70%+). Do not let the substrate dry out completely; pour water into the corners of the enclosure to keep the bottom layers moist.
- **Water:** Provide a sturdy water bowl that is large enough for the lizard to soak in if they choose. Change the water daily.

6. DIET & NUTRITION

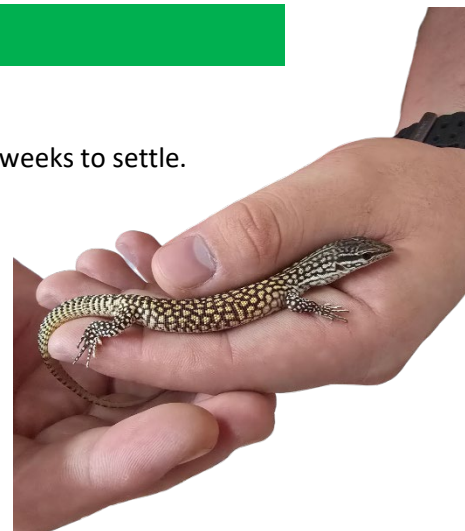
Ackies are insectivores with high metabolisms.

- **Staple Feeders:** Crickets, woodies (wood cockroaches) and Dubia Roaches are excellent staples.
- **Variety:** Rotate in mealworms, superworms, and silkworms. Wet dog food can also be given occasionally. Just make sure it's a good quality brand like Probalance, Science diet or Billy and Margot ect.
- **Treats:** Occasional treats can include lean turkey mince (cooked or raw, no additives), egg (boiled or scrambled), or pinky mice (rarely, as they are high in fat).
- **Supplements:**
 - **Calcium (Pure):** Dust insects every feed for juveniles, every second feed for adults.
 - **Multivitamin/Calcium with D3:** Dust once a week (Optional).

7. HANDLING

Ackies are famous for their "dog-like" tameness, but trust must be earned.

- **Baby Steps:** When you first get them home, leave them alone for 1–2 weeks to settle.
- **Choice-Based Handling:** Let them come to you. Place your hand in the enclosure and let them investigate. Avoid grabbing them from above, as this mimics a predator.



QUICK CHECKLIST FOR NEW OWNERS

- Enclosure (min 120cm length for adults)
- Digital Thermometer & Hygrometer
- Infrared Temp Gun (Essential for basking spots)
- Heat Lamp & Dome (Halogen floodlights work well)
- UVB Tube (T5 HO 10-14%)
- Basking light (Daylight, flood light, radiant heat light ect)
- Substrate (Soil/Sand mix)
- Calcium Powder

If you have any questions or want to make sure your set up is done correctly feel free to message me on Facebook!

