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Anole Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

Anoles (*Anolis* spp.) are small, diurnal, arboreal lizards found throughout the southeastern United States, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. The **green anole (*Anolis carolinensis*)** is the most common species kept as a pet in North America.

Anoles are known for their **color-changing abilities** (green to brown in the case of green anoles), distinctive **dewlap displays**, and quick, alert movements. They typically reach **5–8 inches** in length, with lifespans of **4–8 years** in captivity when well cared for.

While often marketed as “easy” or beginner reptiles, anoles **require careful attention** to heating, humidity, and diet to stay healthy.

## **Housing & Environment**

Anoles are **arboreal lizards** that need vertical space for climbing and basking. A single adult should have at least a **10-gallon vertical tank**, but **larger is better**, especially for groups (which need careful monitoring to prevent aggression).

**Naturalistic setups** with live or artificial plants, cork bark, and branches allow climbing, hiding, and displaying natural behaviors. Dense foliage provides essential cover, helping reduce stress.

**Key habitat considerations:**

* Tall, escape-proof terrarium with secure screen lid
* Branches and vines for climbing
* Multiple hides and foliage for security
* Substrate that holds moisture without molding (e.g., coconut fiber, soil mixes)
* Regular cleaning: Spot-clean daily, full substrate change as needed

## **Heating, Lighting & Humidity**

Anoles are **diurnal** and rely on **heat and UVB lighting** to regulate metabolism and health.

**Temperature gradient:**

* **Basking area:** 85–90°F
* **Ambient daytime:** 72–80°F
* **Nighttime:** Can safely drop to ~65–72°F

**Heat sources:**

* Overhead basking bulb on a thermostat or dimmer
* Avoid heat rocks (burn risk)

**UVB lighting:**

* Essential for calcium metabolism and preventing metabolic bone disease
* Use a **5.0 UVB fluorescent tube or compact bulb** designed for reptiles
* 10–12 hours of light per day

**Humidity:**

* Maintain **60–80%**
* Achieved with regular misting (2–3 times daily) and live plants
* Digital hygrometers recommended for accuracy

Providing a consistent temperature gradient and humidity cycle helps mimic their natural environment and reduces stress and illness.

## **Water & Hydration**

Anoles **rarely drink from standing water** and prefer licking droplets from leaves and enclosure surfaces.

* Mist the enclosure **2–3 times daily** to provide drinking water and maintain humidity.
* Include live or artificial plants with broad leaves for collecting droplets.
* A shallow water dish can be included but may not be used regularly.

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Anoles are **insectivores** requiring a diet of appropriately sized live prey.

**Feeding recommendations:**

* Small crickets, flightless fruit flies, small dubia roaches
* Occasional waxworms or small mealworms (as treats—higher in fat)
* Feed **daily or every other day** for adults; juveniles typically need daily feedings

**Supplements:**

* Dust insects with **calcium powder with D3** 2–3× weekly
* Use a **multivitamin powder** 1× weekly

**Feeding tips:**

* Gut-load feeder insects 24–48 hours before offering
* Offer only as much as the lizard will eat in one feeding to prevent escaped insects stressing the animal

## **Behavior & Handling**

Anoles are **quick, alert, and easily stressed** by handling. While they can become accustomed to human presence, they are best considered **display animals** rather than pets to be held frequently.

**Handling guidelines:**

* Approach slowly from the side
* Limit handling to brief, necessary interactions (like enclosure maintenance)
* Support the whole body gently if handling is necessary
* Always wash hands before and after contact

Stress from frequent handling can suppress immunity and increase disease risk.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Schedule an **initial exam** after acquisition and plan for **annual wellness checkups** with a veterinarian experienced in reptiles.

**Common health issues include:**

* Metabolic bone disease (from inadequate UVB or calcium)
* Parasites (internal and external)
* Respiratory infections (from incorrect temps or humidity)
* Skin infections from poor humidity or hygiene
* Stress-related anorexia or weight loss

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or weakness
* Loss of appetite or weight loss
* Difficulty shedding
* Swollen limbs or jaw deformity
* Wheezing, clicking, or open-mouth breathing

Prompt veterinary care is crucial for best outcomes.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Enrichment supports both **physical and mental health**.

**Enclosure enrichment ideas:**

* Branches and vines for climbing
* Live or artificial plants for cover and visual interest
* Varied perch heights and textures
* Rotating décor to encourage exploration
* Natural light cycles mimicked with timers

Creating a **dynamic, naturalistic habitat** helps reduce stress and promotes natural behaviors like displaying, hunting, and basking.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Green anoles can **change color** from bright green to brown based on mood, temperature, and health.
* Males display a **bright pink dewlap** to communicate and attract mates.
* Native to the **southeastern U.S.**, they thrive in warm, humid environments.
* Often mistaken for “easy” starter pets, they **need precise heating, lighting, and humidity**.
* Lifespans in captivity can reach **4–8 years** with good husbandry.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Tall, secure terrarium (≥10 gallons for single anole; larger preferred)
* 5.0 UVB bulb with appropriate fixture
* Basking bulb on thermostat/dimmer
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Climbing branches, vines, hides
* Substrate that holds moisture safely
* Live or artificial plants for cover
* Misting bottle or automated mister
* Calcium with D3 and multivitamin powders
* Gut-loaded feeder insects
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*