



*Photo Credit: John Virata

Brown or Bahamian Anole (*Anolis sagrei*)

Successful Hitchhikers from Cuba

The brown anole is also known as the Cuban brown anole or Bahamian anole. Native to Cuba, the Antilles, and the Bahamas, brown anoles have been widely distributed throughout many other tropical to sub-tropical regions of the world, including the southeastern United States where they compete with native green anoles and other lizard species. Brown anoles range from light to dark brown, blackish, grayish brown, to tan with a lighter colored dorsal stripe and other light and dark dorsal flecks, crossbars, or striping. The dewlap is reddish orange, and males may also develop a low crest and dorsal ridge as well. As with other anoles, they have a reddish-orange dewlap, which are loose, expandable sections of skin and scales located on their throat and neck in which males will signal to indicate territory. Many species of anoles will also display other physical behaviors such as head bobbing and “push-ups” to display dominance, territory, and/or social structure as well. Brown anoles also have some color changing ability depending on their thermoregulatory state, social structure, and current disposition. As with many other lizard species, brown anoles can also drop their tails through caudal autotomy, which momentarily startles and/or distracts the potential predator long enough for the lizard to make an escape. A new tail regenerates after several weeks, although it is somewhat more vestigial than the original. Brown anoles can make for very hardy, inexpensive, and personable pets to maintain for someone looking for a small lizard with a big personality!

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Iguania

Family: Dactyloidae

Genus: *Anolis*

Species: *Anolis sagrei**

*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

Lifespan and Longevity

Brown anoles may attain longevity of 5 to 6 years or slightly more under the proper care.

Distribution and Habitat

This anole species is indigenous to Cuba, the Caribbean, Bahamas, and surrounding islands, but is also widely introduced elsewhere including portions of the Southeastern and south central United States. It can occupy a variety of terrestrial to low semi-arboreal environments, often in and around residential areas and other human habitations.

Origin/History

Anolis sagrei Duméril and Bibron, 1837.

The brown or Bahamian anole was the first introduced reptile species documented in Florida. They were accidentally introduced to Florida in Key West in the late 1800s likely as stowaways on cargo ships coming from Caribbean islands, where the species is native. From Florida, they dispersed or were introduced into several other areas of the world. Brown anoles likely arrived unintentionally with shipments of cargo, and some appear to be escapes or intentional releases of pets during the 1970's.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Brown, or Bahamian anoles reach 4.0 to 8.0 inches as adults in total snout-to-tail length. Average snout-to-vent length ranges from about 2.1 to 2.4 inches (SVL).

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Arboreal. Provide a sturdy and secure enclosure that is escape proof. A minimum of a 20 to 30 gallon tall glass or other enclosure should be provided for these active, and arboreal anoles. Use a substrate that can retain moderate levels of humidity such as slightly dampened peat moss, untreated potting soil, orchid bark substrates, or sphagnum moss. Bahamian anoles are arboreal lizards that will appreciate added climbing, basking, and hiding opportunities including natural or artificial foliage, rocks, vines, or branches. These anoles can be misted periodically for humidity and hydration or can be provided a shallow water dish that can be cleaned and replaced regularly at least two to three times weekly.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Create a sufficient day/night thermal gradient with full spectrum UVA/UVB lighting with ambient temperatures in the low 80's to mid-90 for a basking spot during the day, and mid 60 to mid 70 degrees F at night. Providing the correct amounts of UVA/UVB overhead incandescent and florescent lighting, and calcium-to-phosphorus ratios is essential for ensuring the health and overall well-being of Bahamian anoles in captivity. Without UVA/UVB, or adequate amounts of it, they can be susceptible to the abnormal bone growth and development known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD), and other health and development maladies. Also be sure to spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. Most anoles require moderate to high levels of relative humidity, which should be maintained at, or around 60 to 70%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; Brown anoles are primarily insectivorous in the wild, feeding on insects and other small invertebrates. In captivity, feed Bahamian anoles a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects

should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Brown anoles also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Brown anoles are active and fragile lizards that may tolerate some levels of handling. These lizards can also drop their tails if handled roughly as well. However, handling should be kept to a minimum when possible, making these lizards better suited as display species.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com

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