

Leopard Gecko Care Sheet



Biological Facts

- *Leopard gecko (Eublepharis macularius)*
- Usually live 8-10 years; life span >20 years of age has been reported
- Terrestrial animal from a desert environment
- Hatchlings measure 3 to 4 inches long. Adult females are typically 7 to 8 inches, and males are 8 to 10 inches.
- Store fat in the tail for times of low food availability

Behavior

- Nocturnal
- Able to live alone or in pairs
- Generally docile animal that tolerates some handling
- Will drop their tail as a defense mechanism if frightened. If lost, the tail will usually regenerate in a matter of months.
- Geckos normally eat their shed skin.

Diet

- Mostly insectivorous – feed a variety of prey items such as crickets, mealworms, superworms, phoenix worms, flies, roaches, etc., can eat an occasional pinkie mouse.
- Prey insects should be “gut loaded” with a nutritious diet for at least 12 hours prior to feeding to your gecko. This powdered gut loading diet for feeder insects is available at most pet stores.
- Dust feeder insects with a calcium supplement 3-4 times per week. You may also provide the calcium powder in a shallow dish.
- Preferably feed smaller more frequent meals (3-4 insects per day) rather than larger meals less often.
- Provide a shallow water dish for drinking and soaking.

Environment

- 10-20 gallon aquarium or similar cage is usually sufficient for 1-2 individuals.
- A shy, nocturnal species that requires a hide box. This shelter should be designed so the gecko can be easily removed from its hiding place, if necessary.
- Requires appropriate humidity for proper shedding – provide a moist hide box (with moistened peat moss, vermiculite, or paper towels inside it), mist the tank daily, or provide a humidifier or reptile misting system.
- Heating one end of the cage allows for a temperature variation that your lizard needs. Provide a temperature gradient of 85-90°F (29.4-32.2°C) on the warm side and 78-80°F (25.6-26.7°C) on the cool side. Cage temperature can drop into the 70's at night.

- The best heat source is either a heat lamp or ceramic heat emitter placed above the enclosure. Under-tank heaters and hot rocks are not as safe or effective.
- UVB lighting is recommended – 5.0% UVB or greater for 12 hours a day. The cage should be dark at night. Although leopard geckos are nocturnal, direct and indirect exposure to UVB radiation will benefit overall health.
- Recommend a non-particulate substrate such as newspaper, paper towels, or reptile carpet; sand, walnut shell, etc. can cause impactions if ingested and irritation of the eyes.

Preventive Care

- Routine physical examination every 6 to 12 months
 - Consult a veterinarian with experience treating reptiles if you have any questions or concerns about your leopard gecko's health.
- Annual fecal examination for parasites
- Blood tests as recommended by your veterinarian

Common Medical Disorders

- Retained shed leading to loss of toenails, digits, or tail tips
- Retained shed or foreign material in the eye leading to infections and vision loss
- Abscesses
- Hemipenial casts (males only)
- Egg binding (females only)
- Calcium deficiency (“metabolic bone disease”)
- Internal parasites