

Leopard Gecko

(*Eublepharis macularius*)



Leopard geckos make excellent pets. Unlike many other geckos, leopard geckos possess movable eyelids. They lack the sticky toe pads other geckos use to cling to glass or walls. A leopard gecko should never be caught or lifted by its tail. The body should be fully supported when handled. They are native to the deserts and dry grasslands of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. Today they are easily captive-bred and may come in different colors and patterns than the wild-type yellow with black spots.

Biological Information

Sexing: The sex of the gecko was determined by the temperature at which the egg was incubated.

Juveniles of either sex look alike. As adults, males have a V-shaped row of enlarged pre-anal pores along their inner thighs. The females only have small pre-anal pits. Males also have paired hemipenial swellings at the base of the tail. Males usually are more heavy bodied and robust with a broader head, thicker neck than the females.

Adult Body Length: 7-10 inches

Adult Body Weight: 45-60 grams

Average Life Span: 10-25 years

Age at sexual maturity: 10 months

Activity: Nocturnal. During the day, shelter beneath rocks and in burrows

Housing

Housing should be easy to clean with good ventilation, with a screen top. Recommended substrates are paper towels, newspaper, recycled newspaper pellets, or orchid bark. Substrate should not be too large to be eaten. Clean fresh water should be provided in a shallow container and changed daily. Hides should be provided in several areas - small boxes, lined with sphagnum moss or paper towels. Mist the hide box substrate daily to promote normal skin shedding. A rough stone or bark should be provided for the gecko to rub off shedding skin. A temperature gradient should be established within the housing--Basking area: 85-88°F, cool end of cage 70-75°F. Juvenile geckos require slightly higher heat than do adults - 5°F warmer is usually sufficient. 14 hours of light, 10 dark: light should be on a timer. Heat can be provided using ceramic heat emitters or radiant heat units. Heat sources that adhere to the glass are not recommended as the glass may become hot enough to burn the gecko. Heat rocks, direct contact heat elements or incandescent light sources are not recommended. UVB light spectrum is not absolutely needed if the gecko is receiving "well-nourished" prey insects with sufficient vitamin D3 and calcium. Calcium carbonate, citrate or gluconate USP powder can be provided in a small shallow dish (like a jar lid) in the gecko's habitat as well as provided to the feeder insects. Geckos can be group housed although only one adult male should be present.

Diet

Primarily live, moving insects. Commercial dried, frozen or pelleted foods are available: geckos need to be conditioned to eat them. Currently, commercially-raised crickets are the main prey item. Prey should be fed a high quality diet ("gut-loaded") for at least 24 hours before feeding to the gecko. Recommended cricket diets include using Insectivore/Reptile Fare (Reliable Protein Products) or Mazuri Cricket Food, mixed with chopped dark leafy greens and powdered USP grade calcium (without vitamin D). Small numbers of mealworms,

superworms (Zophobas), waxworms, silkworms, roaches or other live insects can also be offered.

Live prey should be offered in shallow containers containing some of the cricket diet. Appropriate-sized prey items should be offered every 1-2 days for juveniles, and 2-4 times a week to adults. As a guideline, feed crickets with a body length no greater than the length of the gecko's head, and about half the width of the head. Feed only what the gecko will consume within 15 minutes (usually 4-6 food items). Beware that hungry juveniles housed together may nip toes or tails of cage mates. Excess insects may also nibble on the gecko. Dusting prey items with a calcium supplement may be beneficial if the prey is consumed quickly.

Home Health Care

We recommend gecko owners have a gram scale to weigh their pet, ideally weekly: juveniles should show steady growth. Once adult, the weight should be stable. Extra soaking in a small bath of warm water may be needed to help dry skin come off at each shed. We recommend using a "Temp-Gun", a device that can be used to check surface temperatures including water, the gecko, and all areas within the caging. We recommend the use of an automatic timer for the lights used. We recommend the MegaRay® brand light for uVB spectrum low wattage or other type for non-desert reptiles does not provide excessive heat. You can bring your bulb and cage top in to us for spectrum testing (recommended every 4-6 months/bulb). We also recommend annual physical examinations with fecal parasite microscopic examination. As the gecko ages, other diagnostic testing including bloodwork, radiographs and ultrasonography may be recommended.

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