

Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*) Care Plan

Leopard geckos are nocturnal, terrestrial lizards from southern Asia, including Pakistan and northwest India. Unlike most other geckos, they have eyelids and lack adhesive toe pads. They can live for more than 20 years and reach up to 25cm in length.

Suitability as Pets

Most leopard geckos will become tame with regular gentle handling. It is important not to hold them by the tail, as this can be lost as a defence mechanism. They are a common entry level reptile pet and are cheap and relatively easy to manage

Sexing & Reproduction

Males are larger than females and can be identified by their femoral pores and the hemipene bulges at the base of the tail.

Housing

It is essential that vivarium temperature and humidity are monitored to ensure the correct environment for the species. In the wild leopard geckos are found in dry rocky areas.

A vivarium 90cm long x 70cm high x 35cm wide will house up to three geckos. Do not keep more than one adult male per enclosure, as they are territorial and will fight.

Substrates such as sand, bark or wood chips and corn cobs should be avoided as they can be ingested by the gecko, causing fatal impactions. Newspaper is probably the easiest thing to use as it can be replaced regularly.

Rocks or logs can be used to create hiding places or purpose built hide boxes can be used. In addition a humidity chamber should be provided. This is essential for successful shedding. Juvenile leopard geckos can shed every two or three weeks. Adults will shed three or four times a year and often eat their shed skin. A shallow water dish should be available.

Many leopard geckos will defaecate in a particular corner. This area should be spot-cleaned regularly and the entire vivarium cleaned and disinfected every 2 months.

Lighting

A 12/12 hour day/night photoperiod is fine. A full spectrum UV tube is not necessary.

Heating/ Temperature

A temperature gradient should be provided from 21 °C at one end of the enclosure to 30 °C at the other. This can be achieved by placing a heat mat under or against the side of the vivarium at one end. Alternatively red bulbs or ceramic heaters can be used, although it is essential that heaters inside the vivarium are guarded to prevent direct contact by the animal.

Use a thermostat to control the heat system if possible.
Hot rocks are not recommended.

The temperature can be reduced to 20 °C at night.

Furniture (Climbing and shelter)

Rocks or logs can be used to create hiding places or purpose built hide boxes can be used. In addition a humidity chamber should be provided. This is essential for successful shedding.

A humidity chamber can be made out of a plastic ice cream or margarine tub containing damp vermiculite, moss or wet paper towels.

Water /Humidity

Humidity should be 20-30% with access to an area of higher humidity during shedding as discussed above.

Diet / Feeding

Leopard geckos are insectivorous. Crickets, mealworms, locusts and moths can all be fed, along with the occasional waxworm or pinkie mouse.

Adults should be fed every 2-3 days; juveniles and gravid females require feeding every 1-2 days. Feed in the evening and give as many insects as the gecko will eat.

Food Dusting/ Vitamin Supplementation

In order to ensure that the diet has the correct calcium : phosphorus ratio, prey insects should be gut-loaded with a product such as Bug-Grub (Vetark) for 48 hours before feeding.

Food should also be regularly dusted with a high calcium product such as Nutrobal or Arkvits (Vetark) before feeding. Some geckos will lick calcium powder from a shallow dish.

Preventative Care & Disease Management

Quarantine all new reptiles for at least 3 months. During this time record normal patterns of eating, defaecating, weight gain and behaviour and have them examined by a vet.

It is a good idea to take along a fresh faecal sample so that the vet can check for the presence of gastrointestinal parasites.

Veterinary advice should be sought if a gecko is not eating or producing faeces, is having difficulty shedding, is inactive, losing weight or has a discharge from its eyes, nose or mouth.