

Basic Information on Leopard Geckos

The leopard gecko, *Eublepharis macularius*, is native to Southern Asia. They are found in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Leopard geckos inhabit arid regions, particularly rocky deserts and sparse grasslands. They are nocturnal.

Their maximum length is 10 inches and they can live up to 20 years. They are a quiet, gentle, reptile perfect for beginners. Since they are easy to breed, most are captive hatched in this country, eliminating shipping stress and parasites usually found in imported reptiles.

Like many lizards, their tail can break off readily. This permits the gecko to get away while leaving a food source behind for a predator. The tail will quickly grow back but may not look as good as before.

Typically the leopard gecko has a yellow background with brown spots covering the adult. A juvenile gecko has a striped pattern that fades to the spotted pattern with age. They have eyelids and lack adhesive lamellae (sticky pads) on their feet.

Housing

Geckos can be kept in a 10 gallon tank with a screen top. Since they are terrestrial, they prefer more ground area than height. Use calcium-based sand or aspen as a substrate. These are recommended specifically because they can be ingested by the gecko without digestive problems.

Natural looking decorations such as cork bark, rocks, and artificial plants give your pet hiding areas and provide a beautiful backdrop. **Geckos need a hiding box.** A resin cave looks very natural, and gives your pet a sense of security as well as a place out of the heat.

Geckos need a moisture retreat. It can be any plastic box (with a tight fitting lid) large enough for the lizard. Cut a small hole in one end (just large enough for the lizard) and place wet paper towels or a substrate (presoak in warm water first) such as Jungle Earth or Eco-Earth inside. All of these substrates will hold moisture. The purpose of the "retreat" is to keep your lizard hydrated and help during shedding. If placed over an under-tank-heater - it makes a mini steam room for your pet.

TIP: Use a bic lighter to melt a hole in a plastic container. By *melt*ing a hole, rather than cutting, you avoid leaving sharp jagged edges that may cut or scratch your pet.

Another way to help prevent dehydration and make shedding easier is misting. Fill a clean spray bottle with very warm tap water, add Mistimize by Hagen and spray your pet every other day. Baby geckos, who don't readily drink from a dish, must be misted 2 to 3 times a day.



Food

Geckos mainly eat insects. Mealworms, crickets, waxworms and the occasional pinkie (baby mouse), are all relished by your pet. We recommend dusting your pet's food with a calcium powder/vitamin powder mixture. You can also feed your "feeder" insects a vitamin enriched food such as

"Gutload" This gives your pet a balanced diet. You may feed your pet every day or every other day as many insects as it cares to eat.

Lighting and Temperature

Geckos like a warm temperature; 80° - 85° during the day, and 70° - 75° at night. Use an under-the-tank heater or a heat lamp on one side of the habitat. Leave the other side unheated so the gecko will have a retreat area with cooler temperatures.

Some geckos like to bask. Use a basking light over a rock to provide above and below heat. Again make sure your pet has a retreat area with cooler temperatures. Since fat-tail geckos are nocturnal, UV lighting is not needed.

More than one gecko can be housed together provide there is only one male. Two males **will** fight. If you house more than one together make sure everyone is getting enough to eat. Males may dominate females.

Choosing a Pet

When choosing a pet look for clear eyes, an alert attitude and a moderately fat tail. If possible, see the animal eat. Ask to handle the lizard. The gecko should be alert, curious but calm.

Veterinary Care

Take a stool sample from your pet to a reptile vet to check for parasites. Many captive bred lizards are parasite free at birth only to ingest parasites from crickets. Make sure your vet is actually familiar with reptiles. Do a fecal check if the lizard stops eating, slows its growth significantly, appears stressed or hides, has runny stools, or just doesn't act its usual self.

Please Note: The information in this handout is meant to provide basic information only. There are several good books available on the care and maintenance of geckos.

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Basic Information on Fat-Tail Geckos

The fat-tail gecko, *Hemithoconyx caudicinctus*, is native to West Africa from Senegal to Northern Cameroon. Fat-tail geckos inhabit savannah, rocky hillsides, dry open woodland and river edges. In captivity they prefer a semi-moist micro-habitat and a dry area for foraging. They are nocturnal.

Their maximum length is 10 inches and they can live up to 20 years. They are a quiet, gentle reptile - a little more on the shy side than leopard geckos.

Like many lizards, their tail can break off readily. This permits the gecko to get away while leaving a food source behind for a predator. The tail will quickly grow back but may not look as good as before. If your lizard loses its tail, keep it warm and well fed until it grows back.

There are two pattern morphs (colorations), one with a white dorsal stripe (which runs from the top of the head to the end of the tail) and one without. There are several color morphs (colorations) - bands of rich chocolate brown and a lighter brown are the most widely seen.

Housing

Geckos can be kept in a 10 gallon tank with a screen top. Since they are terrestrial, they prefer more ground area than height. Use calcium-based sand or aspen as a substrate. These are recommended specifically because they can be ingested by the gecko without digestive problems.

Natural looking decorations such as cork bark, rocks, and artificial plants give your pet hiding areas and provide a beautiful backdrop. **Geckos need a hiding box.** A resin cave looks very natural, and gives your pet a sense of security as well as a place out of the heat.

Geckos need a moisture retreat. It can be any plastic box (with a tight fitting lid) large enough for the lizard. Cut a small hole in one end (just large enough for the lizard) and place wet paper towels or a substrate (presoak in warm water first) such as Jungle Earth or Eco-Earth inside. All of these substrates will hold moisture. The purpose of the "retreat" is to keep your lizard hydrated and help during shedding. If placed over an under-tank heater - it makes a mini steam room for your pet.

TIP: Use a bic lighter to **melt** a hole in a plastic container. By **melting** a hole, rather than cutting, you avoid leaving sharp jagged edges that may cut or scratch your pet.



Another way to help prevent dehydration and make shedding easier is misting. Fill a clean spray bottle with very warm tap water, add Mistimize by Hagen and spray your pet every other day. Baby geckos, who don't readily drink from a dish, must be misted 2 to 3 times a day.

Food

Geckos mainly eat insects. Mealworms, crickets, waxworms and the occasional pinkie (baby mouse), are all relished by your pet. We recommend dusting your pet's food with a calcium powder/vitamin powder mixture. You can also feed your "feeder" insects a vitamin enriched food such as "Gutload" This gives your pet a balanced diet. You may feed your pet every day or every other day as many insects as it cares to eat.

Lighting and Temperature

Geckos like a warm temperature; 80° - 85° during the day, and 70° - 75° at night. Use an under-the-tank heater or a heat lamp on one side of the habitat. Leave the other side unheated so the gecko will have a retreat area with cooler temperatures.

Some geckos like to bask. Use a basking light over a rock to provide above and below heat. Again make sure your pet has a retreat area with cooler temperatures. Since fat-tail geckos are nocturnal, UV lighting is not needed.

More than one gecko can be housed together provide there is only one male. Two males **will** fight. If you house more than one together make sure everyone is getting enough to eat. Males may dominate females.

Choosing a Pet

When choosing a pet look for clear eyes, an alert attitude and a moderately fat tail. If possible, see the animal eat. Ask to handle the lizard. The gecko should be alert, curious but calm.

Veterinary Care

Take a stool sample from your pet to a reptile vet to check for parasites. Many captive bred lizards are parasite free at birth only to ingest parasites from crickets. Make sure your vet is actually familiar with reptiles. Do a fecal check if the lizard stops eating, slows its growth significantly, appears stressed or hides, has runny stools, or just doesn't act its usual self.

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