

Leopard Geckos

They originate from the deserts of Asia and they spend most of the daytime underground, coming out at dusk. Leopard Geckos are a solitary nocturnal species and therefore are most active in the evening. The vivarium needs to be positioned carefully away from direct sunlight. They use heat from the surrounding environment rather than basking like other lizard species.



They can shed their tail when caught by a predator and this is used to aid them escaping whilst the predator is occupied. This means that when handling Geckos you must never restrain or lift them by their tail. Their tail will grow back but it will never be as long or thick as before. The more times the tail is shed the less it grows back.

The vivarium needs to be long enough to provide a temperature gradient between the ends and high enough to prevent escape. Leopard Geckos do not climb, unlike other species of lizard. The bare minimum length is: 3 times the length of the lizard, the minimum width is twice the animal length. However larger ones are much better and easier to regular the temperature of.

Geckos need heat provided by a heat mat and a ceramic heater. The mat needs to be placed underneath the vivarium to prevent any burns. Do not use heat rocks within the vivarium as they can pose a high burn risk to your Gecko. They do not need a basking spot but a low level UVB bulb would be beneficial for a few hours a day, this needs to be changed every 6 months as the level of UV emitted reduces with time.

The heat mat should cover no more than 40% of the floor surface of the vivarium so there is a heat gradient between the two ends that allows the Gecko to regulate its own body temperature.

- The vivarium needs to have a thermometer at both ends to ensure there is a temperature difference at all times.
- The cool end can just have a simple thermometer stuck to the wall just above 'Gecko height'.
- The hot end needs to be controlled by a thermostat, with the probe at floor level, to ensure that it doesn't overheat. This ideally should be a dimming thermostat and attached to the ceramic heater/bulb.
- There should be hides at both ends of the vivarium as Geckos don't like to be exposed and will go between hiding places to avoid the sun or predators.



Leopard Geckos scoop their food when eating, this means that substrates such as sand, bark or calcisand can be an impaction risk. The best substrate is reptile matting, or flat stones which replicates the natural habitat without being ingested or having fibres that can trap toes. These can be easily washed to reduce the risks of a bacteria build up.

Like most other lizard species the Leopard Gecko sheds its skin on a regular basis. The first sign of this happening is the colouring of the Gecko becomes dull and pale, then you start to notice areas of skin detaching from the body. It is important to resist the temptation to aid your Gecko by pulling off this loose skin. It will quite often cause distress and can lead to your Gecko avoiding being handled. You can also cause damage to the area where the skin isn't loose enough and can cause the loss of toes or even the tail.

- To aid the shedding an area of the vivarium should be kept at a higher humidity than the rest. This can be provided by having an enclosed hide with dampened sphagnum moss. This should be moistened every day to ensure it doesn't dry out as your Gecko may use it at other times too.

Leopard Geckos are insectivorous so their diet consists solely of insects. There are many different food sources on the market, both live and packaged. The best for Leopard Geckos are crickets; these have the best ratio of protein, fat and chitin to ensure a healthy Gecko. You can also feed wild caught insects such as flies, spiders, millipedes, woodlice and small snails. Make sure they are caught from areas free of insecticides/herbicides.

- All shop bought live food needs to be fed on good quality leafy greens before feeding to your Gecko. This will replicate what happens in the wild and provides vitamins and minerals. Provide a source of water they won't drown in, e.g. cotton wool soaked in water.
- Only feed suitable sized crickets to your Gecko. The rule of thumb is that the cricket should be no bigger than the space between your Gecko's eyes. Therefore, most Geckos shouldn't be fed crickets bigger than 1 inch or 2.5cm long. Mealworms can be fed on occasion but care must be taken as they are higher in fat and chitin than crickets. Wax worms should only be fed as a treat or in anorexic individuals due to the high fat content.
- When feeding your Gecko all food must be dusted with a calcium supplement. This helps prevent metabolic bone disease which is a debilitating condition where the bones become fragile as calcium stores deplete. This can lead to fractures, deformities and death.

Important Facts:

Temperature: hot end 30°C, cold end around 25°C.

Moss box to provide an area of high humidity

A low level UVB bulb (2%) should be provided for a few hours a day, ideally around midday.

Feed 2-3 times a week and only feed the amount of food that your Gecko will eat in 5 minutes.

Ensure any live prey is 'gut loaded' with good quality leafy greens before feeding to your Gecko.

Place water in a dish that the Gecko can lower its head into. Place in the cool end to prevent it drying out.

Life expectancy 6-10 years but some male can reach up to 20 years.

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