

Leopard geckos (Eublepharis macularius) are gentle, hardy, long-lived lizards that have fascinated beginner and advanced reptile keepers alike. Originally native to the deserts and dry savannahs of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, leopard geckos are now well established in captivity following decades of large-scale commercial breeding.

Leopard geckos are nocturnal; as free-ranging animals in arid grasslands, they shelter themselves during the day beneath rocks and in burrows. Most adults are yellow with black spots; however, as a result of multi-generational captive breeding, several designer color and pattern varieties of leopard geckos are available.

Zoological Education Network provides educational materials about exotic companion animals.

Most Common Disorders of Leopard Geckos

- Intestinal parasites
- Metabolic bone disease
- Egg binding
- Gastroenteritis / diarrhea
- Sand impactions
- Shedding problems
- Loss of digits
- Tail loss
- Stomatitis
- Respiratory infections

Visiting your reptile veterinarian for routine health checks will help prevent many diseases and support you in having a long, satisfying relationship with your gecko. For help in finding a reptile veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians (ARAV) by visiting www.ARAV.org and click on "Member Directory."

©2009 Zoological Education Network
800-946-4782 561-641-6745 www.exoticvrm.com

LEOPARD GECKOS



Companion Reptile Care
S E R I E S

What to Expect from Your Leopard Gecko



Leopard geckos have a well-deserved reputation for making excellent pets. Their ease of maintenance, moderate size and attractive appearance have earned them high praise and popularity in the pet industry.

Vital Statistics

Body length: 7-10 inches (17-25 cm)

Body weight: 45-60 g

Average life span: 10-25 years

Age of sexual maturity: 10 months

Unlike many other geckos, leopard geckos possess movable eyelids and lack the sticky toe pads that enable many other geckos to cling to glass or walls. A leopard gecko should not be caught or lifted by the tail; the body should be fully supported when it is handled.

Is Your Leopard Gecko a Male or Female?

As juveniles, there is little difference between male and female leopard geckos. Interestingly, leopard geckos undergo temperature-dependent sex determination, which means the sex of the gecko can be predicted based on the temperature at which the egg was incubated.

As adults, males have a V-shaped row of enlarged pre-anal pores along their inner thighs, whereas females have only small pre-anal pits. Males also have paired hemipenal swellings at the base of the tail, which females lack. Males are slightly more heavy-bodied and robust with a broader head and thicker neck than females. Both males and females make equally good pets.

Diet

Leopard geckos feed primarily on live, moving insect prey. Commercially available diets have recently

emerged that include dried insects and frozen prepared meats; however, leopard geckos need to be conditioned to feed on these items and some are hesitant to adapt to them.

The diet may consist of commercially raised crickets with smaller numbers of mealworms, super worms (*Zophobas*), waxworms, silkworms, roaches and other live insects. Prey items should be fed a high quality diet ("gut-loaded") for at least 24 hours before feeding them out.

Live prey should be offered in shallow containers, which will prevent mealworms from burrowing, reduce cricket dispersal in the enclosure and reduce accidental ingestion of substrate by the gecko.

Appropriate-sized prey items should be offered every one to two days for juveniles, and two to three times a week for adults. As a general rule, 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 no more than the animal will consume within 15 minutes, which usually amounts to 4-6 food items. Beware that hungry juveniles housed together may nip toes or tail tips off their cage mates.

While vitamin and mineral supplementation is controversial, leopard geckos will tolerate a wide range of supplementation regimes. Consult with your exotic animal veterinarian. Dusting prey items with a calcium supplement is probably beneficial. Prey are dusted daily for juveniles, while prey are supplemented every 2-3 feedings for adults. Adding nutritional supplements, such as HEALx Sunshine Factor[®], may be beneficial.

[®]www.HarrisonsPetProducts.com

What Your Veterinarian Looks for in a Healthy Leopard Gecko

Alert and responsive attitude

Bright body colors

No sign of old skin adhered to toes

Fat tail



How to Keep Your Leopard Gecko Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- ✓ Take a newly purchased leopard gecko to an exotic animal veterinarian for a wellness examination and fecal check for parasites.
- ✓ Quarantine new geckos in a separate area of the house for at least 30 days.
- ✓ When housing geckos together in groups, include only one adult male to avoid fighting.
- ✓ Ensure a gradient of temperatures in the enclosure, from 70°F (21°C) on the cool end to 84-88°F (29-31°C) on the warm end.
- ✓ Mist the hide box substrate daily to promote normal skin shedding.
- ✓ Provide heat with a heating pad, heating tape or basking light.
- ✓ As a nocturnal animal, leopard geckos may be adapted to low light intensity and thus may require lower levels of supplemental UVB light in captivity than other reptiles.

Housing for your leopard gecko should:

- ✓ be at least 200 square inches (1290 cm²) of floor space and 6 inches (15 cm) high for a group of 2-3 animals
- ✓ be easy to clean with good ventilation (provide a screen top)
- ✓ include clean fresh water provided in a shallow container and changed daily
- ✓ contain a small bowl of powdered calcium supplement
- ✓ include acceptable substrates such as paper towel, newspaper, orchid bark or fine sand (sand is controversial)
- ✓ provide a moist hide box filled with sphagnum moss, cypress mulch or vermiculite
- ✓ include a rough stone or bark for the leopard gecko to rub on during shed periods

It is important for leopard geckos to avoid:

- ✗ coarse sand, corncob or walnut shell as a substrate
- ✗ free roam of the house
- ✗ cats, dogs or other predators
- ✗ being picked up by the tail
- ✗ being housed together with more than one adult male
- ✗ hot rocks or direct contact with heating elements or light sources
- ✗ oversupplementation of vitamins or minerals
- ✗ oversupplementation with UVB light
- ✗ insects from the yard, which may be contaminated by pesticides