



All About the

Leopard Gecko

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The Leopard Gecko

About the Leopard Gecko

The Leopard Gecko, scientifically known as *Eublepharis macularius*, is a reptile native to western India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. They make ideal pets as they take up little space, have simple food requirements, come in many patterns and colors and can withstand life with an absent-minded owner. They are rather excitable when they are babies, but as adults they become much tamer. Either way, they are harmless, which makes them a good pet for homes with children.

Average Length	7-10 inches	Characteristics	Nocturnal, shed skin to evade predators.
Average Lifespan	10-30 years	Special Needs	Heat lamp, humidity control
Coloring	Spotted	Health Concerns	Prone to parasites such as pinworms and hookworms



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Gecko Characteristics

Geckos are among the nicest pet snakes, and they have a gentle, easy going nature. These snakes are rarely aggressive, and even when provoked they prefer to find a way to escape safely rather than biting the attacker. Approximately 8 to 10 inches long at birth, these snakes average 3 to 4 feet at maturity. Remember to handle your snake gently, not pinching it, and let it slide through your fingers.

Selecting Your Gecko

Before you acquire an exotic animal of any kind, it is important to research and read about its care. As the interest in owning reptiles has increased over the last several years, many books and pamphlets have been produced to help potential new owners discover what species is right for them.

Normal phase geckos are available seasonally in pet shops with the “designers” must be purchased directly from the breeder. Generally, geckos can be purchased during the hatching season, which is April through October and shipping through the mail is usually quite safe. Select a gecko that looks healthy and is responsive when handled. Consider not only the overall look of the gecko, but also its current living conditions; this will give you an indication of how well it is currently being cared for. Don’t hesitate to ask the pet shop owner to throw a live cricket in with any gecko that you are considering; if it immediately goes after the cricket, that gecko might be the one for you. Be sure to only select a gecko from a pet shop or breeder in which all animals appear to be healthy and well cared for. Some things to look for:

- full and plump bodies
- healthy skin without mites or ticks
- bright and clear eyes



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Selecting Your Gecko's Habitat

When selecting your reptile's habitat, it is important to consider several things such as what type and size is appropriate, substrate, temperature, light, furniture, and what type of feeding accommodations are necessary.

Type and Size of Your Gecko's Habitat

An aquarium tank is suitable for your new gecko, provided there is ample ventilation. Being terrestrial, the tank length is more important than its height. The minimum recommended length for 1 leopard gecko is 2 feet long x 1.5 x 1.5 feet; this size is also able to host 2 geckos, but a 3-foot long tank would be more comfortable.

The only substrate that can be used safely, at least in their earlier months, is paper towel or newspaper; others run the risk of impaction. As they mature and grow, other substances can be used safely as well; these include fine sand and children's play sand. The reason it is advisable to avoid sand when your gecko is smaller is because it may eat the sand and become impacted.

Since geckos are unable to regulate their own body temperature, a temperature gradient is essential; proper body temperature is essential for healthy digestion. Achieving the ideal temperature can be done in different ways. One method is to place an under-tank heat mat at one end of the tank to create the warm end; this should be about 88 degrees Fahrenheit; the rest of the tank can be kept at room temperature, approximately 70 degrees. Some owners choose to use heat rocks, although these do run the risk of over-heating and causing burns to your gecko. Whatever you decide to use, it is advisable to use a heat source that is equipped with a thermostat.

Habitat Care and Maintenance

Any debris, dead crickets and feces should be removed from the tank on a daily basis. Folded paper towel or newspaper can be placed in the toilet area and removed as soon as it is soiled.

Maintaining a happy and healthy habitat for your gecko can be generally easy, as long as you keep up with it. Maintaining a happy and healthy habitat for your gecko can be generally easy, as long as you keep up with it. Initially, it is a good idea to provide a screen top for your cage; this is particularly important if you have small children or cats. You should also keep the habitat off the floor and keep the daytime temperature at a consistent 82 to 88 degrees. Keep your geckos' habitat away from direct sunlight as it can quickly overheat and cause death.

Feeding

Crickets are a good staple to any geckos' diet; silkworms and wax worms can also be offered to your gecko, although wax worms are high in fat. These food items should be no longer than the width of your geckos head; and they should be fed four live food items per gecko, per day. Most leopard geckos will not eat pre-prepared dried foods.

Supplementing their food is also necessary to better match the nutritional content of the natural diet of the Leopard Gecko; leaving a small dish of vitamin-mineral powder in your geckos' tank at all times is a good idea.



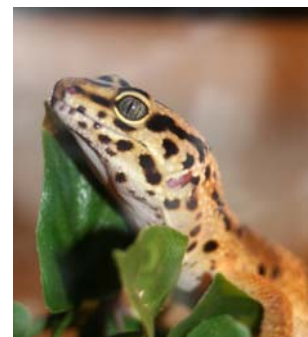
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The Leopard Gecko Baby

At this stage of your Leopard Gecko's life, starting them out properly will ensure that you keep a happy and healthy Leopard Gecko for the span of their life. You will be feeding you Gecko mostly crickets, but they also enjoy the occasional silkworm or wax worm, although these should be treats since wax worms are very high in fat.

The Leopard Gecko Adult

As your Leopard Gecko grows, their needs change. You will want to be sure your adult Leopard Gecko has adjusted to their surroundings. Adults should be fed four live food items per gecko each day. Most Geckos will not eat pre-prepared dried foods. Keep plenty of water around for your Gecko so they can re-hydrate themselves and ensure they are properly being taken care of.

The Senior Leopard Gecko

As you go through the years with your Leopard Gecko, you will want to ensure they are comfortable, kept warm, adhering to their diets, and maintaining their light source. Annual visits to a veterinarian who specializes in reptiles are essential in ensuring that your Leopard Gecko stays healthy for years to come.

Medical Considerations

Leopard Geckos are typically a very hardy species if kept in optimal conditions. However, when acquiring your new gecko, it is advisable to take a fecal sample to a qualified reptile veterinarian who can analyze it for parasites, as parasite problems are not always immediately obvious. By getting your gecko checked immediately, you can begin treatment, if necessary, before it begins to suffer.

The most common internal parasites are pinworms, which can be carried by pinworms, hookworms and roundworms. These are all easily treatable and your vet can assist you with this.

If you choose to breed your gecko, your female will be ready to lay her first egg at 10 months of age. An interesting fact of this species is that the sex of the gecko is not determined at fertilization; it is set during the first two weeks of incubation. This means that if you would like the offspring to be male, all you need to do is expose the eggs to a daytime high of 90 to 92 degrees for the first two weeks. If you prefer females, the daytime temperature should not exceed 82 degrees.

Necessary Items

When you initially bring your new gecko home, you only need the basics; an aquarium with paper towel or newspaper across the bottom, a few hide-boxes and some feeding dishes. As you get to know your new pet, you will discover what he likes and dislikes; you may decide to add a few fake plants or stick with rocks and hide boxes.



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