



Why Do Leopard Geckos Make Great Pets?

Due to their docile nature and ease of care, captive-bred leopard geckos make great pets! Their small size, hardiness, attractive appearance and availability makes this species a suitable choice for families and first-time reptile parents. Their small size and availability also mean that their affordable husbandry requirements can be easily maintained in any home or apartment.

Lifespan

Leopard geckos are a long-lived species with an average lifespan of 10-20+ years.

Size

Hatchlings measure 3 to 4", but not for long! You can expect your leopard gecko to reach an adult length of 7 to 10+" in as little as 9 to 12 months when they reach sexual maturity. Males are typically larger than females.

Natural History

Leopard geckos are native to Southeast Asia: Southeastern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and parts of India. Their natural habitat ranges from deserts to arid grasslands. Nocturnal by nature, these geckos spend most of their day hiding among rocks or in deep, moist burrows.

Housing

A leopard gecko can be housed in a 10 to 20-gallon tank for the entirety of its life, although larger housing is recommended when housing multiple animals together (but never more than one male per enclosure). Ensure that the lid is fitted and secured, and well ventilated, so that it may be safe to support light fixtures and keep any other household pets out. As these geckos are primarily terrestrial, attention should be focused on providing your gecko with ample floor space and décor for exploration and thermoregulation opportunities.

Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, reptiles must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For leopard geckos, these nocturnal, desert dwelling lizards thrive in the warmth of the day and the cool of the night! At the warm end of your enclosure, aim for a temperature of 85-90F. The ambient temperature should remain in the mid 70s and can safely drop into the mid 60s at night. The use of heating pads and/or CHE's (ceramic heat emitters)/white incandescent basking bulbs/red or purple heat bulbs are the best way to provide heat for this species. Never use heat rocks as these may burn your gecko! Measure temperatures closely with digital thermometers at both the warm and cool end of your enclosure.

Although this species is nocturnal, new studies have shown that leopard geckos benefit greatly from 1-2 hours of UVB exposure daily. Exposure to appropriate wavelengths of UV can provide a day/night cycle for your gecko and aid in the absorption and metabolism of calcium. Providing a low output UVB is recommended but is not necessary.

Substrates & Cage Décor



For younger geckos, non-loose particle substrates such as paper towels, newspaper or reptile carpet liners work well to reduce impaction risks. For adults, dry, dust free substrates such as fine clay/sand or reptile carpet may be used*.

Leopard geckos like to play hide and seek! They need to be able to hide during the day and explore at night. Cork bark flats, cork rounds, flat pieces of driftwood, and commercially available reptile décor work well. Artificial plants as well as live ones (without spines) may be used as well. Provide a variety of hiding places on both the warm and cool ends of the enclosure.

Despite living in the desert, leopard geckos still need to be provided with water. Offer a shallow water bowl in the event that your gecko decides it would like to drink but not deep enough that it could drown. For the most part however, a leopard gecko's enclosure should be kept dry and, as they spend most of their day in a moist burrow, a moist hide should also be provided. To stimulate this in your enclosure, add moistened moss to one of your hide boxes to create a micro climate that keeps your gecko hydrated and aids in shedding. Mist the moss with water periodically.

Diet & Nutrition

Leopard geckos are insectivores, meaning they primarily consume insects and do not eat plants or vegetables. Your gecko should be offered gutloaded, dusted insects regularly, which include appropriately sized crickets, dubia roaches, mealworms, or black soldier larvae. Superworms and waxworms may be offered as a treat. Never feed pinky mice to your leopard gecko.

Hatchlings should be offered insects daily for 6 months. After 6 months, geckos can be offered insects only 2 to 3 times a week. The size of insects offered should be no greater than the width between their eyes.

Dusting your insects with a high quality calcium powder is one way to provide your gecko with all of the vitamins and nutrients they need. Place insects and dusting powder into a plastic bag or deep tin and shake gently to coat insects with the powder. Offer coated insects by dumping them into the enclosure. Another way to provide extra supplementation to your gecko is by offering the powder in a small shallow dish. The gecko can lick the powder from the dish, and regulate how much it may need.

Handling & Temperament

As a standard, do not handle your gecko until it has settled into its new home. This may take at least 2 weeks. Once your gecko is settled, begin handling by placing fingers beneath their body and lifting and supporting the remainder of their body with your other hand. It is recommended that you start this process in the tank and then move handling to the floor as young geckos can be quite jumpy. Allow your gecko to walk hand-over-hand for 10-15 minutes per day until your gecko has grown accustomed to your touch. It is important that you never grab or hold your gecko's tail, as their tails can drop off. If this happens, the tail can regenerate in about 40 days but it will not appear the same. With persistence, leopard geckos can become handable, docile, and rewarding pets.