



## General care

A healthy Leopard Gecko should be bright and alert. The body should be well covered with no signs of loose skin and in particular the tail should appear fat. There should be no signs of diarrhoea, the eyes, mouth and nostrils should be free of discharge and the body held off the ground when walking.

Diarrhoea: this can be caused by incorrect feeding or internal parasite infestation.

Mouth rot: cheesy deposits appear in the mouth.

Respiratory problems: signs include fluid or mucus from the nose.

Bone disorders: signs include twitching limbs, poorly formed limbs, swollen limbs and a soft deformed mouth. This is due to poor nutrition and lack of calcium and vitamins; it can be at least partially reversed if caught in time.

If you are at all worried about the health of your Leopard Gecko you should consult your vet as soon as possible.

Some reptiles carry naturally-occurring bacteria – *Salmonella* - which can only be contracted by humans by ingestion. Good hygiene and washing hands after handling your Leopard Gecko should prevent any problems occurring.



## Shopping List

- |                                |                          |                     |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Vivarium                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Substrate           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Heat mat/hot rock/spotlight    | <input type="checkbox"/> | UV light (optional) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thermometers x 2               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thermostat          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small Water bowl               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Food bowl           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Live foods                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Calcium supplement  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vitamin supplement             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cage furnishings    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pet safe disinfectant          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Deodorizer          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good book covering the species | <input type="checkbox"/> |                     |                          |

***This leaflet is produced by the Pet Care Trust, the national charity that promotes the benefits of pet ownership and education. For more information, go to [www.petcare.org.uk](http://www.petcare.org.uk), or phone 01234 273933.***

***Remember you must never release your pet into the wild.***



# CARING FOR YOUR LEOPARD GECKO

The Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*) is one of the most popular species of reptile to be kept in captivity and is available in a multitude of colour mutations besides the natural form. In the wild this species inhabits desert areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan and northern India.

Leopard Geckos are almost exclusively nocturnal in nature although they may on occasions bask at the mouth of their burrows for short periods in the morning and early evening.

They are usually very docile and make excellent pets although considerable care must be taken when handling them since the skin can split quite readily and, if handled inappropriately, may also shed their tail. Leopard Gecko adults can reach sizes of 20-30cm. Average life span is 15-20 years (males tend to be longer lived than egg laying females).

This species is naturally solitary. Adult males should not be kept together and even male:female pairs should be separated most of the time. Groups of one male with several females is often the best approach.





## Housing

An escape proof wooden, plastic or glass vivarium with fitted air vents can all be used to house Leopard Geckos. The depth needs to be sufficient to provide a depth of substrate and the minimum size should be around 60x30cm for a single animal and commensurately larger for group-housed specimens..

All reptiles are cold blooded and need an external heat source to maintain their body temperature. Each species of lizard require different degrees of heating, but all lizards benefit from a range of temperatures within the vivarium. One end of the vivarium should have extra heating, this creates a thermo gradient allowing the lizard to choose its preferred temperature. Thermometers should be placed at each end of the vivarium to monitor the temperature. The overall vivarium temperature should be controlled by a thermostat.

Wire mesh guards should be fitted over any overhead heat sources used in order to prevent thermal burns.

### Temperature

Heat must be provided by using underfloor heat mats or heating cables and spot lights can also be used in Leopard Gecko enclosures but are not essential. Your pet shop will advise on suitable products. Create a thermal gradient of around 22-24 °C at the cool end and around 30-32 °C at the hot end. Night temperature can be dropped by several degrees at both ends and such a drop in temperature will actually benefit Leopard Geckos.

### Lighting

Leopard Geckos are nocturnal lizards and in all probability do not require UVB lighting for their well-being (multiple generations have been bred without problems whilst not supplying UVB lighting). However, some keepers choose to provide a low intensity UVB bulb in any case and this certainly will not cause any harm.

### Humidity

Leopard Geckos come from desert areas) and require relatively low humidity and good ventilation. Provide an area of damp substrate under a hide at the cool end especially during the skin shed periods.

### Furnishings

The floor of the cage should be covered with a suitable substrate such as one of the desert sands sold specifically for reptile carpet, reptile carpet or such like. It is very important to provide hiding places in both the cooler and hotter ends of the vivarium and to ensure that the substrate under at least of the hides is kept relatively moist in order to facilitate better skin shedding of

your Leopard Gecko. Piles of rocks, securely positioned slates and other such furnishings will be appreciated by your pet. If using products like Calci-sand it is recommended that a rich source of calcium is supplied so that the animals do not ingest too much of the substrate as a calcium source (resulting in possible gut impaction).

### Cleaning

Remove droppings and any uneaten livefood daily. Water bowls should be washed, dried and refilled regularly. Vivariums should be completely cleaned out and disinfected with a pet safe disinfectant on a regular basis. Soiled substrate should be disposed of and replaced daily through a spot-cleaning regime. Deodorisers can be used, your pet shop will advise.



## Feeding and water

Leopard Geckos are insectivorous and will eat a varied diet of live insects, including appropriately sized locust hoppers, crickets, wax moth larvae, mealworms, etc. Adults will also take pinky mice. Feeding should ideally take place daily but in limited quantities that are eaten within an hour or two – the enclosure should not have excess livefood moving around the morning after feeding. Waxworm larvae and mealworms should be fed relatively sparingly as they have a high fat content.

**It is very important that food should be dusted with a vitamin and calcium supplement on a regular basis, once or twice a week for non-breeding adults but 3-4 times a week for juveniles and egg-laying females. Failure to undertake such dietary supplementation is highly likely to result in bone malformation and other such problems.**

A shallow water bowls should be provided and the water changed regularly.



## Handling

Leopard Geckos are usually very docile and rarely bite.

Movements should be slow, gentle but confident. To pick up your gecko, place one hand above the shoulders and support the underside with the other hand.