

Geckos



Geckos are a very interesting and ornate group of reptiles. Leopard geckos are among the largest, at 8-9 inches, and differ from the rest in many ways. They have a prominent outer ear, eyelids, and do not have lamellae, the suction cup-like ends to their toes for which most geckos are so famous. Juvenile leopard geckos have a striped pattern that changes to spots with maturity. They are usually yellow with brown markings, but there are many beautiful variations of this pattern available today.

When purchasing a gecko, look for signs of good health and sanitary housing. Only captive-bred animals should be purchased. You should ask to see the gecko eat. Healthy geckos will usually have good appetites. Wild geckos that have traveled all the way from their homelands of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, or India will be stressed and undoubtedly have a high parasitic load.



Geckos should be housed in a long aquarium, as opposed to a high one, since they are terrestrial. A 20-gallon tank is large enough for 3-4 adult geckos, but only one of these should be a male, or they will fight each other. The best substrates to use are newspaper, AstroTurf, or paper towels. While attractive, sand and other granular or chipped substrates may cause impaction. Rocks and logs provide decorative exercise areas. One hide box should be provided per gecko. The areas under the hide boxes should be kept moist. This will mimic the cool burrows they dig in the wild to escape their very arid surroundings, and will also aid in shedding.

Leopard geckos are nocturnal, but some ultraviolet lighting is necessary for good health. A spotlight with the correct wattage bulb will provide good daytime light and heat. The temperature directly under the heat source should be on a gradient from the 80's to room temperature. At night, the low 70's is adequate.



Leopard geckos usually have good appetites and thrive well on insects. Crickets, [mealworms](#), and [waxworms](#) are favorites, and occasionally day-old mice may be offered to adult geckos. All should be dusted with a calcium / D3 supplement, such as Reocal with D3, as well as a reptile multivitamin. Juveniles should be fed and supplemented daily, while adults should be fed every other day and supplemented every other feeding. Gravid females should be supplemented at every feeding. Insects should be “gut-loaded” with a high-quality diet before they are fed to the gecko, to increase their nutritional value. A clean, shallow water dish should be provided with fresh water daily.

