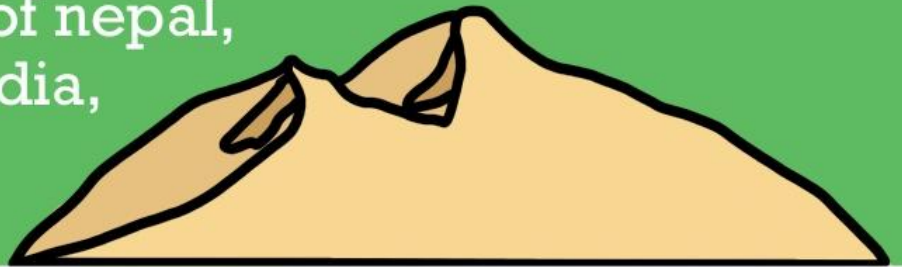




Leopard Gecko Care Sheet

The common leopard gecko is a nocturnal, ground dwelling lizard native to the rocky, dry grassland and desert regions of nepal, afghanistan, iran, india, and pakistan.



5 things to know about your leopard gecko

- 1) They can live as long as 20 years
- 2) Your leopard gecko can grow as long as 10 inches
- 3) When startled, they can drop their tails in defense
- 4) They cannot climb walls or vertical surfaces
- 5) They have distinct outer ears and eyelids, unlike many gecko species



Setting up your Leopard Gecko's Enclosure

Leopard geckos originate from semi-arid deserts and love a warm, dry environment. They will also need a hiding place that is moist and humid - this is where they will retreat when it is time to shed their skin.

Their enclosure should be a well-ventilated terrarium with a screen lid. Start with a 20 gallon long tank (30" x 12" x 12" or 76 x 31 x 31 cm).

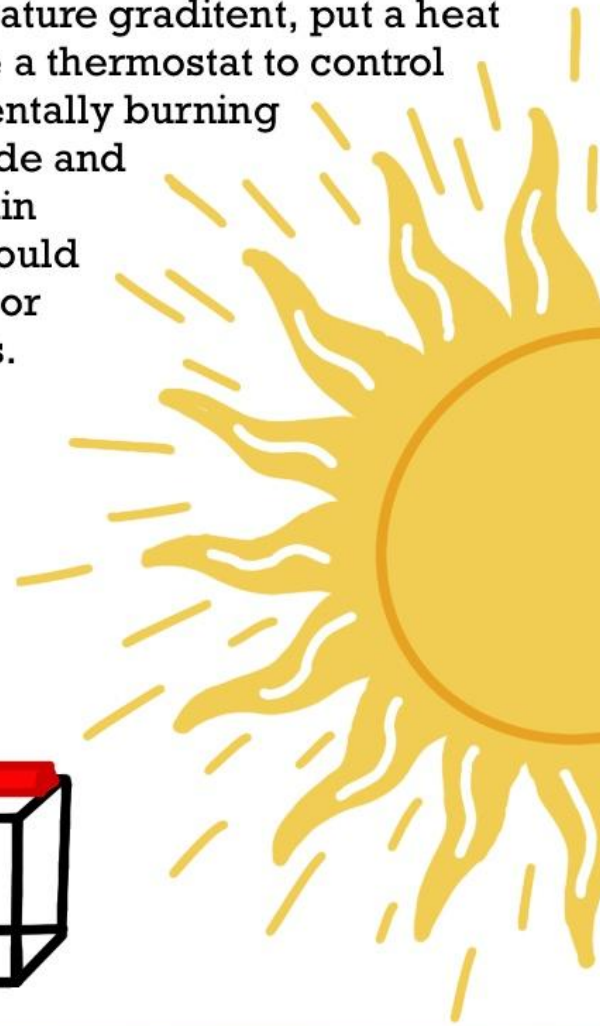
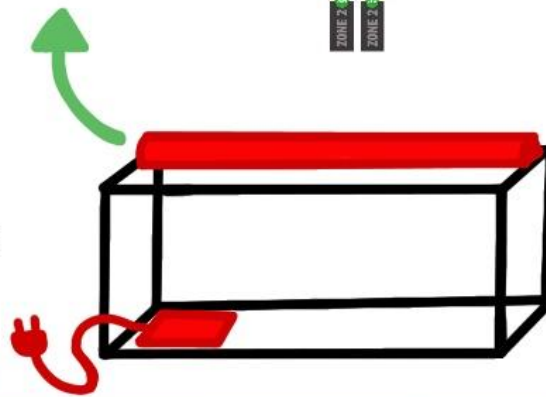
Temperature and Humidity: To create a temperature gradient, put a heat mat on one side of the habitat. Be sure to also use a thermostat to control the temperature of the heat mat and avoid accidentally burning your gecko. Aim between 88-92F on the warm side and 70-80F on the cool side. Use a hygrometer to retain humidity from 10-30%. Ambient temperatures should be around 70F. Consider a ceramic heat emitter, or CHE, on a dimmer to raise ambient temperatures.



Tubular UVB lights are more effective than coils. Aim for a bulb and hood that spans the length of your terrarium.



Purchase an under the tank heat mat that is appropriate for your size tank. Attach the mat beneath one side of your tank to create a gradient.



Substrate: Avoid loose substrates such as sand or dirt as they have a risk of impaction - which is emergent and can be deadly. Instead, consider paper towels, tile, or non-stick shelf lining. More experienced caretakers may also consider excavator clay or bio-active enclosures. In your humid hide, consider eco earth or moss to hold moisture.

Lighting: Leopard geckos do best with 12 hours of visible light each day and benefit from a low-wattage UVA/UVB light source. The best bulb to get would be a 5-6% (2% for albino and hypersensitive morphs) T5 or T8 tube light.



Your goal in decorating your leopard gecko's enclosure is to not only create an environment that meets their needs for survival, but is also enriching and exciting. You definitely need the basics. They are:

- 3 hides (cool, warm, and humid)
- a water source
- a feeding method (see "feeding")
- calcium dish (see "feeding")

Consider adding additional enrichment, such as:

- Fake plants
- GrapeVine or other safe woods
- Additional hides

Not all leopard geckos are the same. While they are generally not considered climbers, some may enjoy climbing a piece of driftwood. Others may prefer the security of a lot of hides. As you get to know your gecko, you will learn what they like and do not like, and how to best adapt your enclosure to suit their needs.





Feeding your Leopard Gecko

Leopard geckos are strictly insectivores. They should not be fed fruits, vegetables, or any other “human” foods - only insects. Still, variety is important in any diet, not only will this keep meal times more interesting for your gecko, you are more likely to provide a balanced diet when giving multiple kinds of insects. Below are some good choices.

Staples



Dubia Roaches are a great option for a staple insect. They are pricey in stores, but more affordable when bought online.

BSFL are rich in protein and vitamins. Additionally, they are less costly than Dubia Roaches



Crickets are a popular option for reptile owners as they are affordable and readily available. However, do not leave crickets in the enclosure with your gecko as they are known to irritate and bite geckos.

Treats



Waxworms, or Butterworms, are a yummy treat for your reptile. However, they should not be fed regularly as they are high in fat - and so yummy your gecko may get addicted!

Mealworms are a popular option for many reptile keepers due to their low cost. However, they have a crunchy exoskeleton that can be hard to digest.



Super Worms, like mealworms, have a hard exoskeleton that is difficult to digest. They are also much larger than mealworms, making them even harder for small geckos.



Avoid



Lightning bugs are toxic to any small animal. The same chemicals that make them glow also makes them toxic!

Stinkbugs, while they may be plentiful in some areas, should NEVER be fed to your reptiles. Just like lightning bugs, they are toxic to your pet.



While tempting, you should not feed your pet anything found outside - especially if you do not know it's whereabouts. Bugs can carry any number of parasites and illnesses. While not all will be fatal, most will make your pet very ill.

While geckos under one year should be fed more frequently, healthy, adult leopard geckos only should be fed 2-3 times a week. During feedings, a good rule of thumb is to give them as many bugs as they can eat during a 15 minute period. There are many methods of feeding, and every gecko will be different. Some prefer to eat out of an escape-proof bowl while others do better tong fed. If your gecko prefers to hunt their food, never release insects into their enclosure for safety - instead, allow them to hunt in a separate container.



Supplementing your Leopard Gecko

Leopard geckos, like most reptiles, require extra vitamins and nutrients to stay healthy. There are two ways to accomplish this.

Gut Loading: Have you ever heard the saying “you are what you eat?” This is true for the insects you feed your leopard gecko. The more nutrients that they eat, the more nutrient the insect is for your gecko! Consider giving your feeder insects a different kind of fruit or vegetable multiple times each week.

Vitamin Dusting: Before feeding insects to your gecko, you should lightly dust them in powdered vitamins. The main three vitamins you will want will be Calcium with D3, Calcium without D3, and a multivitamin. If you feed your gecko three times a week, dust one day with the multivitamin and a second day with Calcium without D3. Additionally, leave a bottle cap of Calcium with D3 in the enclosure for your gecko to enjoy as they please.

Cleaning your Leopard Gecko's Enclosure

You will need to perform cage maintenance daily, weekly, and monthly. Each day, you should spot clean your leopard gecko's tank and remove any poop you may find. Additionally, water bowls should be cleaned and replaced at least once a day to prevent bacterial growth. You should also clean or change the substrate as often as every week, depending on the type of substrate you use.

Once a month, you should deep clean your leopard gecko's entire enclosure. Many small pet owners use a vinegar and water mixture. At Critter Corner Rescue, we like a 50/50 mix for monthly maintenance. However, if your gecko has recently been ill, or you are reusing supplies from a previous animal for your new friend, using 90% vinegar and 10% water is a good way to ensure that you will not pass any bacteria from your first pet to your new one.



It is important to remember to NEVER clean with your gecko inside the enclosure. Not only will this be stressful for your gecko, you risk either direct inhalation of your cleaning medium, or accidentally getting it in your gecko's eyes. You will find that it does not feel good to accidentally inhale a spray of vinegar - now imagine inhaling that when your lungs are much smaller.



Keeping your Leopard Gecko Healthy

It is always a good idea to have a veterinarian examine your leopard gecko in an annual physical exam. During this exam, be sure to bring a sample of your gecko's most recently bowel movement so they can test for any parasites. It is also important to perform regular health checks on your leopard gecko to make sure there is nothing out of the ordinary. Geckos, like all prey animals, are good at hiding signs of illness. If you can, purchase a kitchen scale and keep track of your gecko's weight in grams, to be sure that there is nothing going on.

The following behaviors may indicate illness:

- Hiding more than usual
- Eating or drinking less
- Weight loss
- Swollen joints
- Abnormalities with the eyes, nose, or mouth
- Discolored skin and shedding problems
- Runny or abnormal droppings for more than two days
- Lack of droppings for an extended period of time.

Remember that all animals can potentially carry viral, bacterial, fungal, and parasitic diseases that are contagious to other animals and humans. You should thoroughly wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after contact with your pet or their habitat - especially if you are about to interact with another animal.



Bringing home your New Critter

Congratulations on your new little friend! We hope that you enjoy them as much as we did in their time with us. Here are a few things to keep in mind when bringing them home:

-Do not be alarmed if they do not want to eat for a week or two. Leopard geckos will store fat in their tail and can live off of that nutrients. They often will refuse food until they feel safe. You won't want to handle them during this time. Though its tempting, stress weakens their immune system and makes them extra vulnerable to disease.