

## CLEANING AND WATERING

Remove droppings and any uneaten live food 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.

## HANDLING

Leopard Geckos are usually very docile and rarely bite. Your movements should be slow and gentle but confident. To pick up your Gecko, place one hand above the shoulders and support the underside with your other hand.

Reptiles can carry a form of Salmonella, which can be transferred to humans. Good hygiene and washing your hands after handling your Leopard Gecko should be sufficient to prevent any risk of infection.

## PET CODE OF PRACTICE

Never release a pet (companion animal) into the wild. It is illegal and for most species this will lead to an untimely and possibly lingering death, as they are not native to this country. Any animals or plants that do survive might be harmful to the environment. This includes the need to properly dispose of soiled substrate, so that eggs and live food can't escape into the wild.

## SHOPPING LIST

- vivarium
- substrate
- heat mat/spotlight
- UV light (optional)
- thermometer x2
- thermostat
- food bowl
- small water bowl
- live foods
- calcium supplement
- vitamin supplement
- cage furnishings
- pet-safe disinfectant
- Leopard Gecko care book



## THE FIVE ANIMAL WELFARE NEEDS

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 means all pet owners have a legal duty of care to their pets. Anyone who is cruel to an animal or is found not to be providing the five animal welfare needs, as listed below, can be fined and sent to prison.

- 1 Environment:** pets should be given the correct housing according to its size, this includes shelter, space to exercise and a secure, comfortable place to rest.
- 2 Diet:** pets should be offered the correct type and volume of food to cover all their nutritional needs alongside access to clean, fresh water.
- 3 Behaviour:** all pets should be allowed to exhibit normal behaviour patterns and should be provided with the facilities to do so.
- 4 Company:** some animals require the company of their own kind, whilst others should be kept on their own.
- 5 Health:** all animals should be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease, and given veterinary treatment if they become sick or injured.



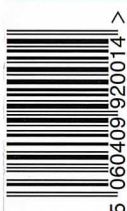
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**REPTA**  
Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association

These organisations support the aims of The Pet Charity to promote the welfare and responsible keeping of pet animals.



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# GUIDE TO CARING FOR LEOPARD GECKOS

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Leopard Geckos are usually very docile and make good pets if the correct care and accommodation are provided.

The average life span is around 15 – 20 years and adults can grow to 20 – 30cm.

## THE PET CHARITY GUIDE TO CARING FOR LEOPARD GECKOS

The Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*) is one of the most popular species of reptile kept in captivity and is available in a multitude of colour mutations. In the wild, this species inhabits dry areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Northern India.

Leopard Geckos are almost exclusively nocturnal in nature, although they may on occasion bask at the mouth of their burrows for short periods, usually in the morning and early evening. They are not social animals, so they are best kept singularly.

### GENERAL CARE

- **Diarrhoea:** this can be caused by many problems including incorrect feeding or internal parasites.
- **Mouth rot:** cheesy deposits appear in the mouth.
- **Respiratory problems:** signs include fluid or mucus from the nose. This can be caused by too low temperatures or too high humidity.
- **Metabolic bone diseases:** signs may include deformed or swollen limbs or jaws, paralysed hind limbs and/or abnormal twitching. This is due to a lack of calcium, vitamin D3 and/or a lack of exposure to UVB light and heat. It can be stabilised if caught in time and properly treated.

If you are at all worried about the health of your Leopard Gecko you should consult your vet as soon as possible. It is recommended to seek a vet that has experience with reptiles.

Your pet should also be insured against unexpected veterinary costs.

### CHOOSING YOUR LEOPARD GECKO

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 – as this means they are well fed. 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.

### HOUSING

A well ventilated, adequately heated, escape-proof vivarium is the best housing for a Leopard Gecko. The depth needs to be sufficient to provide a depth of substrate and the minimum size should be around 60x30cm for a single animal.

### LIGHTING

Leopard Geckos are nocturnal lizards, so UVB lighting is not essential if they are kept on a balanced diet, with an adequate source of dietary calcium and vitamin D3. However, they will benefit from the provision of UV which can be provided from a low-output UVB reptile lamp.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Use considerable care during handling as their skin can split quite readily. And, if handled inappropriately, they may also shed their tail.



### TEMPERATURE

All reptiles are cold blooded, so they need an external heat source to maintain their body temperature. And each species of lizard requires different degrees of heating. One end of the vivarium should be heated to create a thermal gradient, allowing the lizard to choose its preferred temperature. The ideal thermal gradient is 24 – 25°C at the cool end and 30 – 34°C at the hot end. Night temperature can be dropped by several degrees at both ends and this will benefit your pet as it reflects his natural environment.

Background heat can be provided by using heat mats. These should cover no more than 50% of the wall or floor area and should ideally be wall mounted. If used on the floor, great care must be taken to ensure the mat is not thermally insulated by deep substrate or décor, as this can be a fire risk. More intense heat can be provided by using spot lights or heat lamps. All heat sources should be guarded to prevent burning and must be controlled using a suitable thermostat. Your pet shop can advise on suitable heating and temperature control products.

Thermometers should be placed at each end of the vivarium to monitor the temperature range and the maximum temperature of the heat gradient.

### HUMIDITY

Leopard Geckos come from dry areas and require relatively low humidity and good ventilation. Provide an area of damp substrate under a hide at both ends of the accommodation, especially during the skin shed periods (which can be every two to five weeks).

### FURNISHINGS

The floor of the cage should be covered with a suitable substrate, which your pet shop can advise on. Sand may be used but it is recommended to feed from a dish to prevent the animal ingesting sand whilst eating. Leopard Geckos will only eat sand if lacking in calcium, so maintain correct vivarium temperatures and supply an extra source of calcium to prevent this.

It is essential to provide your pet with places to hide and feel secure, and these should be located in both the cooler and hotter ends of the vivarium. Pieces of cork bark make great shelters and piles of rocks, securely positioned slates and other such furnishings will also be appreciated.

Ensure that the substrate under at least one hide is always relatively moist, as this will facilitate better skin-shedding.

### FOOD AND WATER

Leopard Geckos are insectivorous and will eat a varied diet of live insects, including appropriately-sized locust hoppers, crickets, wax-moth larvae and mealworms. It is important to feed the live food a nutritious diet and water to ensure your pet is also receiving a balanced diet. This is known as 'gut loading' the live food.

Feeding should ideally take place daily, but in limited amounts that are eaten within an hour or two – the enclosure should not have excess live food moving around the morning after feeding. Waxworm larvae and mealworms should be fed relatively sparingly as they have a high fat content. Remove any uneaten live food after a couple of hours to prevent them nipping the Leopard Gecko during the night.

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, and 3 – 4 times a week for juveniles and egg-laying females.

Failure to undertake dietary supplementation may result in metabolic bone diseases and other such problems. Check with your pet shop for the best supplements to use for your Leopard Gecko.

