



AVIAN & EXOTIC ANIMAL HOSPITAL, PLLC

Leopard Gecko Care Sheet

General Information

Leopard geckos (*Eublepharis macularius*) or 'leo' for slang, originated from the Middle East - Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan area. Adults can obtain lengths of 8-12 inches long and 60-100+ grams (g) in weight in captivity. Babies are around 3 inches and average 3g in weight. Leos are a terrestrial animal which means they are ground dwellers that stay on the ground. Being nocturnal they are most active at night. They are one of the most popular and easiest geckos to keep in captivity. This care sheet will give you the info you need to keep your gecko happy and healthy. And with proper care a leopard gecko can easily live up to 20 years.

Housing

Leopards are very easy to house. A pair (1 male and 1 female) can live comfortably in a 20 gallon long glass aquarium. With an aquarium you can view them better and make a realistic vivarium.

Substrate

The best substrate to use is paper, newspaper, paper towel, or slate. Sand is not appropriate, as the gecko may become impacted. If you're looking for a more naturalistic look go with slate. Don't ever use aquarium gravel, walnut shells or calcium sand. These substrates can be fatal if caught in a gecko's digestive system.

Hides

In order for the gecko to feel secure in its enclosure provide several hiding places. These can be as simple as inverted plant saucer pans, plants, wood etc. It's a good idea to put a hide on both the warm end and cool end (discussed in heat section below) of the cage. This will allow them to hide and feel comfortable on both ends of the cage. Along with a "dark" hide they need a humid hide. The most popular is using a throw away container such as a glad or Tupperware container. Cut a hole in the lid and fill it with moist peat moss, sphagnum moss, forest bed (Coconut fiber), or paper towel. This will provide enough humidity to allow the gecko to shed properly.

Heat & Light

Provide a hot spot of 88°-90°F with the opposite side of the cage in the mid 70's. It is very important to provide a temperature gradient for the animal. This is basically having a warm end and a cool end that will allow the animal to regulate its own body temperature. There are several different ways to provide proper heat. One is using under-tank heating. This is a strip of heat tape that runs under the cage. This is probably the best heat as it is direct heat. Another way is to

provide a heat lamp with a 40w or 60w light bulb. This will give off heat and light. Because leopard geckos are nocturnal there is no need for special UVB lighting.

Handling

When holding any animal it's best to take it slow. When you first acquire a new animal it is best not to hold them for a few weeks. This will allow them to adjust to the new environment and get used to everything. After a few weeks, gently hold the gecko letting it walk across your hand inside the cage. Once the gecko is familiar with you, you can take it out and hold it. Remember that too much holding or too rough of holding can cause stress on the animal. Another thing to remember is to never grab the tail! If threatened, the tail will break off. It will eventually grow back but will look nothing like the original.

Diet

Leopard Geckos are insectivores and the most common items used are crickets, mealworms, superworms, silkworms, and small cockroaches as a staple diet. The occasional pinky mouse and waxworm can be given as a treat. It is not recommended feeding a lot of waxworms (they are very fattening and addicting to the animal).

Only feed as many insects as the gecko will consume within 24 hours. Left over prey running in the cage can cause stress and also the gecko might get nibbled on by hungry insects. If you're feeding mealworms, superworms, etc. that can be contained in a dish they can be left with the animal 24/7 without harm. The prey item should be no larger than half the width of the geckos head.

Supplementation

Offer calcium dusted prey 1-2 times per week. Dust with a vitamin/mineral supplement such as Vionate, RepCal, Herptivite or Minerall Indoor/Outdoor. Osteo-form is a good supplementation also. Providing a dish of calcium for the gecko 24/7 is recommended. If they want more calcium the animal can lick what they need or want. Supplementation is very important because MBD (Metabolic bone disease) can cause serious problems with reptiles.

Gutloading

Make sure to gutload the food item prior to feeding. Gutloading is feeding very nutritious foods to prey prior to feeding. This will make a healthier insect and in the long run a healthier gecko. Remember your geckos are what they eat.

Water

Offer a dish of fresh water at all times. Keeping the water fresh is very important.

Maintenance

Cleaning is important and needs to be done on a regular basis. If you're using paper or paper towel change it every week or sooner if needed. Disinfecting is recommended using a chlorhexidine solution. It will safely sanitize everything.