



# Leopard Gecko

*Eublepharis macularis*

## Care Sheet

**Caging needed:** A 10- to 20-gallon aquarium houses one or two leopard geckos from hatchling to adult size. Larger tanks tend to cause the geckos to stray away from their proper heat and hide box. Although visibility is reduced, many people use plastic storage boxes as housing. Any cage you choose should be at least 1 foot tall. Be sure to have a secure screen top on your gecko cage that will support a light fixture, provide good ventilation. A hide box filled with moist moss or vermiculite is needed, so your leopard gecko can shed its skin properly. Live or artificial plants can be added for a nice decorative touch.

**Substrate:** Newspaper, pea gravel, flat stones, cage floor mat, or no floor covering are okay. A young or debilitated leopard gecko might consume sand or fine-particle products on the cage floor, and this could lead to intestinal impaction. Leopard geckos actually have a “bathroom” in one corner of their cages, and that area can be spot-cleaned without disrupting the entire system. Do not expose your gecko to commercial plant soils or sands that may contain fertilizer or pesticides.

**Temperature & Lighting:** The ideal temperature in the hide box is 88 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit at all times. The ambient air temperature of the room they are housed in should be above 73 degrees. The best way to heat your leopard gecko is by using an under tank heating pad or tape. Heating one end of the cage is best. This allows for a temperature variation that your lizard needs. Heat rocks tend to become too hot for leopard geckos and should be avoided due to the risk of burns. An overhead heat lamp can also be used for the basking area. For viewing, a simple low-wattage light can be placed overhead on the screen-cage top and left on 12 hours a day. Because leopard geckos are active at night,, they do not need to bask under a special UVB light.

**Diet:** Live insects are a must for your gecko; they do not eat plants or veggies. The best items to use are mealworms or crickets, but you can treat your pet to waxworms or superworms once a week if you wish. All insects must be first given a nutritious powdered diet for at least 12 hours before being fed to your leopard gecko. This process is called gut loading,” and it is very important to the health of your pet. Keepers can offer two appropriately sized insects for every inch of a leopard gecko’s total length. A meal every other day is fine. Therefore, a 4-inch-long gecko would receive eight mealworms three to four times a week. It is normal for leopard geckos to eat their shed skin.

**Misc:** Males should not be housed together. Females can be housed in pairs if they are around the same age, length, and temperament. In general, do not handle leopard geckos on a regular basis until they settle in and are more than 6 inches in total length. Once your gecko is large enough, it is best to sit on the floor, and let your gecko crawl through loose fingers and hand-over-hand for 10 to 15 minutes per day until they are accustomed to your touch. This taming process takes only five to seven days. Never grab or hold the gecko’s tail, or it might be dropped.

**Average size:** 7-10 inches long

**Life Span:** 6-10 years

