



Crested Gecko

The Crested Gecko (*Rhacodactylus ciliatus*) has become increasingly popular among reptile enthusiasts over the last several years. These geckos, from the New Caledonian Islands near Australia, make excellent pets.

They are extremely hardy, easy to keep and handle, and come in a variety of beautiful colors and patterns.

Cage Setup

Crested Geckos do well in either a simple, hygienic cage, or an elaborate, naturalistic setup. If your purpose is to display them, you may want to take a naturalistic approach. In the wild, these geckos live in rainforests. They can be found both on the ground or high in the tree canopy, it is very important to give them similar conditions in captivity. This includes a substrate of peat moss, cypress mulch, or other bedding that will keep the humidity high. Also, include hiding and perching places such as clean branches, driftwood, corkbark, and live or artificial plants. 20 gallon tall aquariums are perfect for single geckos or pairs. 29 gallons and larger cages are need for larger groups. There are many types of reptile-specific cages on the market as well. Be sure to choose one that is tall so the geckos will have vertical space to climb.

Temperature

Although they come from a tropical environment, Crested Geckos prefer cooler temperatures. During the day, temperatures in the upper 70s and low

80s is ideal. This can drop to the mid 70s or even upper 60s at night. Crested Geckos will become stressed if exposed to temperatures above 85. In most cases, room temperature is fine, although a low wattage red or blue bulb, or an undertank heating pad made for reptiles can be used to provide a little extra warmth.

Food & Feeding

One of the biggest advantages to these geckos have over most other small lizards is that their feeding is not restricted to insects. Fruit babyfood, such as peach or apricot is readily eaten. This should not be used as the only food source for crested geckos because it lacks protein, calcium and other vitamins and minerals. There is a new food that has recently been introduced by T- Rex called "The Crested Gecko Diet".

Its a powder that contains vitamins, minerals, protein, bee pollen, spirulina and other nutritious food for Crested Geckos. We mix some of this with babyfood. A good feeding regimen is to give them crickets twice a week and babyfood mixed with Crested Gecko Diet twice a week. This schedule will give the gecko a fast growth rate and will allow a hatchling to reach maturity in about 9 months. It is important not to overfeed, as extra crickets crawling in the cage will stress them. Feed each gecko five or six crickets that are each about 1/2 the size of the gecko's head. Dust the crickets with a calcium and multivitamin mix with each feeding. Make sure to use both a calcium AND a multivitamin powder as these provide different vitamins and minerals. The easiest way to ensure that your crickets are properly supplemented is to use the T Rex Leopard Gecko ICB supplement. Its designed for Leopard Geckos, but works great for Cresteds and most other insect eating lizards. It contains vitamins, calcium and other ingredients that will enhance your gecko's diet. Babyfood should be offered in a low dish or jar lid. Generally, each adult gecko will consume about one tablespoon per feeding. A small water bowl should

also be offered. Make sure this is not deep as babies can easily drown if they fall in. Spray the cage with water once or twice a day. Crested Geckos tend to be more active after spraying, especially at night.

Handling

These geckos tend to be fairly easy to handle. However, there are some individuals that are flighty and may try to bite. As a rule, Crested Geckos will allow gentle handling several times a week. Care should be taken when handling. Rough handling is stressful and may cause them to drop their tail. The tail will not re-grow if it is lost.

Longevity

It is suspected that their average lifespan in ideal conditions is about 10-15 years.