



## Leopard Gecko

These attractive nocturnal lizards are popular pets due to their small size and simple care requirements. They are available in many striking color and pattern variations. Leopard geckos reach a length of 8-10 inches when fully grown and with proper care can live over fifteen years.

### General

Baby geckos may be nervous and excitable at first, but with regular gentle handling they will become tame and easy to manage. Children should be supervised when handling a gecko and taught never to pick it up by the tail, which may break off.

### Housing

A 10 gal. glass aquarium, with a secure screened lid, makes a good home for a single gecko, while a long 20 gal. aquarium will house 3-4. A male can be kept with females but never with another male. Use paper towels, artificial turf or indoor/outdoor carpet for covering the floor, never sand, gravel or any material with small pieces that could be swallowed. Give your gecko a 6 inch square plastic box to hide in and fill it with moist vermiculite, which should be misted daily. Cut a hole in the side of the box to make an entrance. Rocks and logs make good resting areas and add interest to the tank. Water must always be available in a heavy shallow dish. Geckos need a daytime temperature range of 85-90 deg. F, which can be provided by a simple spotlight placed above the tank, reptile heat tape or a heating pad placed under part of the tank. At night the temperature may be allowed to fall to the low 70's deg. F. Always place the tank out of direct sunlight to avoid overheating.

### Diet

A good diet for leopard geckos is crickets, waxworms and mealworms. It's best to feed the crickets with calcium fortified pellets before giving them to your geckos, and you can further ensure good nutrition by sprinkling the food with calcium/D3 and multivitamins. Fresh water should be available at all times.

### Cleaning

Wash out the water and food dishes daily. Both the tank and washable floor coverings should be washed weekly in hot water and thoroughly dried. It is convenient to have two pieces of floor covering and rotate them.

### Fertility

Leopard geckos are sexually mature at 10 months of age. Male geckos are larger, heavier around the neck and have a line of pores on their belly between their hind legs. They have two swellings

near the vent at the base of the tail. Sex is hard to determine until the gecko reaches 5-6 in length. Most of the geckos sold in pet shops are females.

## Health

Providing they are purchased in good condition, leopard geckos are hardy pets which have relatively few problems. A healthy gecko will have a fat tail and be alert and active, with a good appetite.

## Warnings

Never use "hot rocks" for your leopard gecko as they can cause serious burns.

## More Info

Leopard Gecko Care, by Chris Norman: [www.anapsid.org/lep\\_gek.html](http://www.anapsid.org/lep_gek.html)  
1995. "Geckos & Everything About Selection, Care, Nutrition, Diseases, Breeding, and Behavior", by R.D. Bartlett and Patricia p. Bartlett. Barron's