

Croydon Reptiles Leopard Geckos Care Sheet

The Leopard Gecko *Eublepharis macularius* (also known as leos) is a nocturnal ground-dwelling gecko found in the rocky outcrops of Pakistan, Western India, Afghanistan and parts of Iran. Unlike most geckos it possesses eyelids. Leopard geckos are very low maintenance and make an ideal starter lizard. They become active at twilight or before sunrise. Daylight hours are spent out of the heat of the sun in a burrow or under a rock. Adult Leopard geckos are about 6"-7" in length, including tail. Full size may be attained in about 18 months. An average adult weighs 45-60g and can weigh as much as 100G.

Housing

The vivarium or box they are housed in can be as elaborate or as plain as you like. As a general guide one juvenile/small adult can be housed comfortably in a Faunarium (or similar plastic box) measuring 16x11 inches. Two or three adult geckos can live comfortably in a vivarium or box measuring around 36x18 inches with a height of at least 18 inches. Never house 2 male Leo's together once they are sexually mature, they are territorial and will fight for dominance, sometimes even to the point of serious injury and even death!

There are many different substrates available on the market, a popular choice being sand. Please note that any sand provided with additional calcium may be eaten by your leo and can cause some life threatening damages. It is best to keep babies and the young on Kitchen roll, lino or tiles because of this.

Heating

Leopard Geckos are cold blooded and get their heat from there surroundings. They also need the correct temperatures in order to digest their food properly. Leo's obtain the heat through their underside so the best way to provide this is with a heat mat, placed either under the substrate, or under the enclosure itself. The temperature on the floor where the geckos bask should

read between 84-88F. Leo's do not require any artificial lighting or UV as they are a nocturnal species, and in some colour variations (particularly the albinos) can be potentially damaging as it can burn the retinas in their eyes.

Hides

Leopard Geckos need somewhere to hide. If there are no adequate places for them to do this they will become stressed. These can be made from anything such as margarine tubs to coconut shells, or something specially designed from a reptile shop. Ideally 2 hides should be provided, one in the 'cool' end, the other in the 'hot' end. You should also provide your Leo with a 'moist hide' in the centre of the enclosure. You will most probably find your Leo sleeping in these during the day, and they are also beneficial in helping with the shedding process. Again this can be something as simply as a margarine tub filled with moss, or something specially designed from your local pet shop.

Feeding

Leopard Geckos are insectivorous meaning they only insects. There is a variety available from good pet shops including Locusts, crickets, Mealworms and Wax worms. Many breeders and owners feed their Leo's a staple of mealworms appropriate to the gecko's size, and give other prey once or twice a week. Leo's are particularly fond of locusts as the way they move sets off their predatory instincts. Wax worms should only be given as an occasional treat as they are very fatty and can be addictive. Pinkies can also be given as a treat for those who accept them, as they are high in calcium, this is a good idea to use with breeding females who have recently laid to kick start the weight gain and replace the calcium used to produce eggs.

and Gut Loading

You should always gut load your live food before offering them to your Leo, otherwise you are basically feeding them an empty shell. You can either buy 'gut load' from the Internet and pet

shops and place this in with the prey, or dust some veg with calcium and place this in with the prey. Leave for between 12-24 hours, to make sure all the prey have eaten some of the veg. By feeding the 'food' you also increase how long they live for saving you money in the long run.

Dusting the food is a MUST! They will not get all their calcium and vitamins from their live food alone. Food should be dusted daily. 2 days a week with a multi vitamin (such as nutrobal) and 5 days with PURE calcium (such as calypso) A pot of pure calcium should also be placed in the enclosure for you leo to help themselves too whenever they fill the need.

Shedding and Tail Loss

Like many other lizards Leo's periodically shed their skin. You will notice they turn a duller colour and may not handle as well. They will spend more time in their moist hide during this time as it helps with the shedding process. You will rarely find the skin once shed as they normally eat it for the additional protein it provides. So if you see you Leo nibbling at their skin, don't worry this is normal behaviour. Once your Leo has finished their shed check their feet and tail tip to make sure it has all come off. If there is any shed left over do not pick it off as you can take a toe with it. Instead place their feet in a warm water bowl and soak. If this still does not work then use a damp cotton bud to gently roll the unshed skin off.

Leo's will lose their tails if they are threatened or grabbed by the tail. Cage mates have been known to accidentally grab the tail of another, which has caused the tail to fall off. I have also witnessed one of my own Leo's mistaking their twitching tail for a mealworm and nip the tip off. If this does happen you should remove the Leo from their enclosure where other leos may stress them out, keep them warm, fed and watered regularly as their tails hold fat reserves and are more vulnerable to stress at this time. The tail will grow back but it will not look the same as the old one. It will be shorter and fatter than the original one.