

# Leopard Gecko Care Guide

Prepared by Dr. Lucy Haile on behalf of Wellesley Animal Hospital



*Caring for all of your pets*

Leopard geckos are originally from grassland and desert regions of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. They are small nocturnal lizards who make excellent pets. They can be a variety of colors but commonly live up to their leopard name being yellow with black dots!

## HOUSING

### Substrate

- We recommend using paper towel, newspaper or repti-carpet to line the bottom of the cage
- Avoid sand, gravel, woodchip or small particle materials as your leopard gecko may in this can lead to constipation



### Cages

- A single adult gecko requires a minimum 20-gallon aquarium
- Leopard geckos are solitary animals and should be kept separately. Housing multiple geckos together can result in injury unless adequate space and adequate hides are provided. Don't try to house 2 males together

### UVB Lights

- Leopard geckos are nocturnal lizards so don't necessarily require UVB light
- However, UVB lighting has been shown to improve the health of geckos in captivity and we would recommend having one
- Ensure there is no plastic or glass between your UVB light and your gecko as this will filter the UVB
- UVB production starts to drop off after about 6 months even if the bulb is still working. We recommend setting a reminder on your phone or marking on your calendar to ensure you change your UVB bulb every 6 months

### Heating

- Always ensure there is a thermal gradient in the cage i.e. there is a hot and cold side
- Temperatures:

Hot side: 85-95F      Cold side: 75-80F      Nighttime: 60-70F

- Ideally have a separate thermometer in each of these areas
- Avoid hot rocks as these can burn your leopard gecko

### Humid hide

- We recommend having a humid hide to help with shedding and hydration
- These can be bought or easily created with an appropriate size plastic container such as a yogurt container or Tupperware box. Cut a small hole in the container just big enough for your gecko to get in and out. Place sphagnum moss or paper towel in the bottom and keep this damp. Your gecko will go in and out as they please

### Hide Area

- In addition to the humid hide, be sure to provide an area for your gecko to hide
- There are many varieties you can buy such as reptile caves and shelters
- You will need multiple hides if you have multiple geckos housed together

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## DIET

- Leopard geckos are insectivores and need a wide variety of insects to keep them healthy. Feed as many varieties as possible.

### Insects

- Examples of different insects to consider: crickets, mealworms, waxworms, dubia roaches, silkworms, fruit flies, bean beetles, tomato horn worms, wood lice
- Insects must be gut loaded before being fed to your lizard -a starved insect will result in a starved lizard
- We recommend gut loading insects with Mazuri Hi-calcium gut loading formula, at least 48-72 hours before feeding the insects to your gecko though this can be always available to your insects
- Always ensure insects have fresh water available
- Remove any live insects that haven't been eaten after 20 minutes to ensure they don't injure your lizard

### Supplements

- Dust insects in a calcium carbonate supplement (without vitamin D3) 2-3 times a week
- Dust insects in a multivitamin supplement 1-2 times monthly. Ensure this supplement includes vitamin D and preformed vitamin A. Insectivores can't utilize beta-carotene as a source of vitamin A so it must be pre-formed to prevent nutritional imbalances
- To dust insects place in a Ziploc bag and gently shake. The insects will groom off the dusting so be sure to feed them immediately
- If in doubt if your multivitamin contains the correct supplements bring it along with you to your next veterinary visit

### Water

- Always provide fresh water to your leopard gecko
- Provide water in a shallow dish at all times. Ensure this bowl is large enough for your leopard gecko to sit in and to easily get in and out of
- Soak your leopard gecko two times a week in warm shallow water for 10-15minutes. This increases hydration and helps with shedding

## HEALTH CARE

- Your gecko will hide all signs of illness from you so we recommend yearly wellness examinations and fecal testing to help detect the first signs of sickness
- As well as examining your animal these visits are also a good opportunity to discuss nutrition and care of your gecko with your veterinarian as the most common disorders in reptiles are caused by nutritional imbalances
- Weighing your gecko on a weekly basis can help to detect early signs of illness. We recommend purchasing a kitchen gram scale and placing your gecko in a small plastic container such as a Tupperware box on this. Try to do it at the same time each day
- Weighing your gecko becomes especially important whenever you are changing the diet or if your gecko is sick.
- If you notice that your gecko's weight drops by 10% of its previous body weight contact your veterinarian immediately

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- If you notice a gradual decrease in weight contact your veterinarian to discuss causes
- If you notice a decrease in appetite, decreased in droppings, trouble shedding or your gecko acting more lethargic please contact your veterinarian

