

# Adult Leopard Geckos

## General Information

Leopard geckos (*Eublepharis macularius*) come from the deserts of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and some parts of India. They are part of a small genus of geckos that have true eye-lids. Due to their extreme repertoire of colors and morphs, as well as how easily they are kept and bred in captivity, leopard geckos have captivated the pet industry in ways that few other animals have. Most adults will grow up to 9 inches in total length and can live around 20 years, although some have lived much longer in captivity. They are extremely hardy animals and make a fantastic addition to any reptile collection.

## Enclosure

Leopard geckos are best housed in a glass aquarium. A minimum for three adults is a 20 gallon long although one or two adults will do well in a 10 gallon. Be sure and have a lid to keep unwanted pests out. You will also need a good setup that considers the following four categories

### Substrate

For a naturalistic setup, sand works best with a few rocks and limbs scattered around the enclosure. There are many types of calcium sands on the market which reduce the risk of impaction if ingested. If natural is not your aim then newsprint or paper towels work great and make for a much healthier environment.

### Shelter

Keep at least one dry hide and one moist hide in the enclosure so they feel secure and at home. Leopard geckos are nocturnal and require a good hiding spot during the greater part of the day. A moist hide is necessary to aid in the shedding of skin.

### Temperature

The habitat should have a temperature gradient with the low end around 77° F and the high end around 90° F. Under tank heaters are the best choice, especially if you have a sand substrate. Overhead lamps also work well.

### Water

The best way to offer water to your geckos is by spraying the sides of the enclosure and other objects inside it with water. Leopard geckos will readily lick up the water droplets much more than they will drink from a stagnant dish. They will even eventually get used to the sound of a spray bottle and come out when you begin spraying. You can also provide them with a dish of water so that they have the opportunity to drink at will.

## Feeding

The food of choice should be crickets, mealworms, or a good combination of both. Feed each gecko as many mealworms or crickets as they will take 2-3 times per week. Uneaten crickets should be removed so that they are not a nuisance, but if you put mealworms in a dish of some sort then they are fine to remain in the enclosure indefinitely, allowing the geckos to feed at will. You should dust your feeder organisms with some type of calcium supplement once a week, and always gut-load them 24 hrs prior to feeding.

## Health

Leopard geckos are quite hardy in captivity and experience very few health problems, especially if all the previous husbandry suggestions are followed. One of the most common problems, though, is retaining bits of shed skin. Geckos shed their skin about every 3-4 weeks and will sometimes keep a bit of dead skin around the snout and toes. The best way to care for this is to provide a moist hide so that the humidity inside it can soften up the loose skin and allow for proper shedding.

The major diseases affecting leopard geckos usually involve intestinal parasites. A veterinarian can treat this problem quite easily (and affordably) if caught in time. Symptoms include a loss of appetite, failure to defecate, lethargy, diarrhea, and unusual weight loss.

