



Leopard Gecko

A comprehensive guide on caring for your leopard gecko

Enclosure, Substrate, & Decor

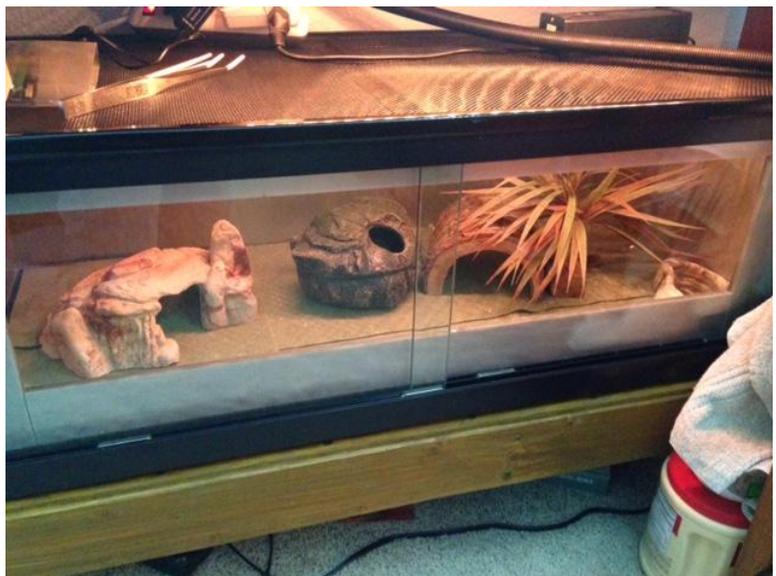
Leopard geckos are comfortable living in 10-20 gallon tanks. Substrate in the enclosure should not be loose as it can cause impaction and can harbor unwanted bacteria. Appropriate substrate choices

include reptile carpet (which can be machine washed), tile, paper towels, or newspaper. Combinations of multiple substrates, such as reptile carpet and tile, can also be utilized.



For a more natural look, a good substrate is decomposed granite (DG). DG starts out as a loose sand-like material and hardens when water is added, creating a desert-look for the enclosure. Start by adding DG directly to the enclosure and mixing water into it. Let the mixture dry and harden. Add more water as necessary and let dry until a hardened substrate is achieved.

Leopard geckos are nocturnal lizards, meaning they are commonly active at night and dusk. During the day however, they require places to hide. A moist hide will help leopard geckos shed. The moist hide should be on the opposite side of the enclosure from the heat source and should be able to house material that holds moisture, such as sphagnum moss, paper towels, or a washcloth. Make sure to change this material regularly to



prevent buildup of unwanted bacteria or fungi.

Aside from a moist hide, leopard geckos require a hot hide. Make sure you purchase or construct a hide that can withstand hotter temperatures, reaching 92°F. See the next section on heating and light to create a proper hot hide for your leopard gecko.

Leopard geckos like to climb. If you so desire, hammocks, rocks, or magnetic shelves may be placed inside the enclosure to allow for climbing.

Heating & Light

Leopard geckos require heat to digest their food. It is therefore essential to maintain a heated portion of the leopard gecko's enclosure. To do so, a heat mat or an overhead heat source is recommended. If you are interested in using an overhead heat source, a ceramic heat emitter is great at reaching high temperatures and are preferred because they emit no light. If you are interested in using a heat mat, you must also use a temperature regulator (thermostat). Pet stores will often try to sell you a heat mat only – this can heat the glass in the tank too hot and even crack it! Thus, a temperature regulator is used to set the temperature of the heat mat. It has a probe that you place over the hot spot (under the hot hide) and will turn off the heat mat when the temperature reaches that maximum set level. Set the temperature of the regulator between 88-92°F.

Co-Habitation

Leopard geckos are solitary lizards. However, people often see them in pet stores housed together. In the wild they only seek each other out to mate. Leopard geckos will compete for food and heat as they grow. It may look like they are getting along, one on top of the other, but this is a sign of dominance and often they will fight. **Only house one leopard gecko per enclosure.**

Feeding, Supplements, & Water

Leopard geckos are carnivores and require a meat/protein diet. Great feeders for them include: mealworms, Dubia roaches, superworms, wax worms, small to medium hornworms, black fly larvae, and small to medium silkworms. A varied diet or mix of these would be a great bug diet! Always make sure you gutload your feeder bugs. Gut loading means that you give the bugs food, mostly produce or dry cat food, and let them eat for about 24 hours. Then feed them out to your leopard gecko. The more nutrients a bug has in its gut, the more nutritious it is for your gecko.

In the wild, leopard geckos eat a varied diet of bugs that provide them with many vitamins and minerals. As a pet owner, you must replicate this as much as possible. Leopard geckos need calcium for strong bones and good health. To achieve this, dust your feeder bugs with both Calcium containing D3 and a Multivitamin (readily available at local pet stores). Be sure to check the expiration dates on these before purchase. In addition to dusting, have a small bowl of calcium without D3 available for your gecko to lick. Your gecko will lick it periodically when needed.

Leopard geckos need a constant supply of water in their enclosure. Have a small water bowl and refill it daily for fresh water.

Exercise

Your leopard gecko needs exercise to maintain good health and an appetite. Periodically take your gecko out and let it safely crawl on you and around a safe area of your house. Word of caution: only take your gecko out to roam if it is used to being handled. A gecko that is not used to being handled may be more prone to lose its tail due to stress.

