



LEOPARD GECKO

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Wild leopard geckos live in the arid, rocky habitats of Pakistan, Western India, and Afghanistan. They are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dusk and dawn, but will come out during the day to bask in the sun. It is **crucial** to maintain an appropriate diet, proper lighting and temperature gradients for reptiles.

90% of reptile medical cases are due to improper husbandry.



Diet: Invertebrates (100%)

Appropriate prey items: Gut-loaded crickets*, dubia roaches, silkworms, black soldier fly larvae (“Phoenix worms”), and hornworms.

NEVER offer mealworms, waxworms, butterworms, or superworms.**

Temperature: Hot end: 88-90°F Cool end: No less than 75°F

Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs (they emit heat but no light). Keep a thermometer at basking level on the hot end of the enclosure, and at ground level on the cool end. Never use heat rocks or heating pads, as they can cause severe burns.

UVB: Reptiles require a specific wavelength of light called UVB. This substitutes natural sunlight in the captive enclosure. **Their bodies are unable to properly absorb calcium without UVB. A lack of UVB lighting will cause severe health problems.**

* Crickets should be gut-loaded (fed) with T-Rex Calcium Plus. This is the only gut-loading formula that has been proven in studies to supply adequate calcium to reptiles. Never use calcium dust; this cannot be effectively broken down and absorbed by the body. It can also cause bladder stones in some reptiles.

** Mealworms, waxworms, butterworms, and superworms do not provide the nutrition that reptiles need. They are reptile “junk food”. They are very high in fat and their calcium/phosphorus ratio is steeply inverted. This causes calcium deficiency, as phosphorus inactivates calcium. High phosphorus levels can also cause kidney damage.

High-quality feeder insects can be ordered online and shipped directly to your home. We recommend:

Oregonsilkworms.com

Joshsfrogs.com

Rainbowmealworms.net

Amazon.com

ENVIRONMENT

Leopard geckos should be kept in a cage that provides them with plenty of space to move around, climb, and hide. An adult leopard gecko should not be kept in an enclosure smaller than 20 gallons (30" x 12" x 12").

UVB Lighting: We recommend using a full-spectrum bulb, the **Reptisun 5.0 or 10.0, manufactured by ZooMed**. Leave UVB bulbs on for 14 hours a day, and make sure that the bulb is not filtered through glass or plastic. These bulbs must be changed every 6 months because their effectiveness as a UVB emitter decreases over time.

Heat: Use ceramic heat emitter bulbs and leave these on 24/7 to maintain appropriate temperatures. Avoid red heat lamps. Studies have shown reptiles have the ability to see red light, and this will interfere with their photoperiod.

Moisture: Wild leopard geckos live in dry environments, but tend to have trouble shedding in captivity. A shallow dish of fresh water large enough for soaking should be provided at all times. Additionally, leopard geckos should be provided a moist hide with damp paper towels or sphagnum moss.

Substrate: Use paper-based bedding, such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News. Coconut fiber is also okay if it is allowed to dry completely after the initial wetting. Avoid all types of sand, including Calci Sand. Sand can be ingested, causing blockage in the intestines.

MEDICAL CARE

Bring leopard geckos in once a year for an annual health check. Every gecko should have a fecal test to check for internal parasites, which are very common.

Common Illnesses:

- a) **Parasitic Infections:** Symptoms include: loss of appetite, inability to gain weight, and slow growth. Diagnosis is by performing a fecal test to check for parasites. Treatment includes administering an oral anti-parasitic medication and repeating fecal tests.
- b) **Impaction (Intestinal Blockage):** This condition is almost always caused by the ingestion of foreign objects or sand. Symptoms include: loss of appetite and inability to produce stools. Geckos exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian right away. Treatment can be difficult and often requires hospitalization. Avoiding the use of sand can prevent this problem!
- c) **Nutritional Secondary Hyperparathyroidism (Metabolic Bone Disease):** This condition is caused by improper nutrition and lack of UVB lighting. Symptoms include: limb and jaw deformities, muscle twitching, lethargy, lack of appetite, and difficulty eating. Geckos exhibiting these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

Bring your leopard gecko to a veterinarian right away if it is showing any of the following symptoms:

Diarrhea or inability to pass stool
Difficulty breathing
Weight loss
Extreme lethargy
Loss of appetite