



Ridgeway

CARE & SET-UP SHEETS

LEOPARD GECKOS AND FAT TAIL GECKOS

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT LEOPARD GECKOS AND FAT TAIL GECKOS

1. 60CM X 45CM X 45CM WOODEN or PLASTIC VIVARIUM
2. SPOT HEATING WITH THERMOSTAT
3. SUITABLE UV LIGHTING
4. BROAD RANGE VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENT
5. NATURAL SUBSTRATE
6. HIDES



Vivarium Set-Up

Your heating should be positioned at one end of the vivarium, creating a hot basking end. The opposite end should have no heating, creating a cool end. Always use a Thermostat to regulate temperature. Placement of your thermostat sensor can be done in a couple of ways to create the desired gradient of temperature, this is one way. Your thermostat sensor should be placed on or just above the substrate in the middle of your vivarium to set the ambient temperature, 29c/83f. You should be achieving basking temperatures of at least 35c/95f. There should always be a cool end temperature of 27c/81f or less. If you are struggling to achieve this please consult one of our experts for advice on how to improve this situation.

We found the best heating for this environment is Arcadia's Deep Heat Projector. As it produces no visible light, it does not need to be turned off. If you wish to have a night time drop or you are using a basking bulb, the optimal night time ambient temperature is 24c-26c/75f-78f. Although they can tolerate slightly lower temperatures overnight this should not be for a long period. To combat low night time temperatures you can extend your animals day time, by leaving the spot bulb running longer. For example 12 hours to 16 hours. You can place rocks in the enclosure that will absorb IR A and B during the day and release IR C once the bulbs turn off. If the room is below 22c/72f for the most of the night then a ceramic bulb or DHP will be essential and should be left running through the night to maintain the temperature. Provided the animal has the previously mentioned cool end temperature, it can choose to cool down if it wishes. Better still a thermostat with a day/night function will give a controlled drop .

Do not ever use a heat mat or heat rock under your animal.

Useful tip.

When positioning hides and decor in the environment, always allow space directly under the heating element to allow the heat to reach the floor. This will help your vivarium function more efficiently, prevent super high temperature build up around the bulb and stop the floor from becoming cold. Although IR light is invisible to us it still reflects off a surface. It is still important to place hides etc around the enclosure. We would suggest they are placed just off centre of your heating source.

Lighting

Despite the popular myth that they don't require **UV lighting**, tests and research have shown that they do benefit from it greatly and it can prevent a multitude of problems. With the correct UV your animal will thrive rather than survive. UVB will help with your animal's natural synthesis of D3 vitamins and the UVA helps with vision. Arcadia's Shade dweller unit is best suited as it was designed specifically for crepuscular species like the Leopard gecko. It offers not only the correct levels of UVB but unlike most other UV tubes, it has a lower level of UVA more closely matching the light levels at dawn and dusk. Its suggested use is for 12-14 hours a day.

The UV tube should be positioned towards the warm end, creating a UV gradient much like your heating. Reptiles have adapted to living with strong UV radiation from above. Placing the UV tube level or within 45° of the eye could damage it severely (photokeratoconjunctivitis or cataracts) symptoms include swelling of the eye and area around it or cloudy eyes. This is thankfully not too common but it is better to be safe and not allow your animal to sit alongside or within a few inches of your tube.

Always remember to replace your T8 UV tube every 6 months and T5 tubes every 12 months, unless the manufacturer suggests otherwise. The tube's UV producing capability will degrade, though the tube will show no obvious sign. Failure to give your new gecko the proper levels and quality of UV could result in irreversible Metabolic Bone Disorder.

Never place your vivarium near radiators, direct sunlight, drafts, busy areas or appliances that create a lot of noise.

Substrate, Cleaning And Furniture

There are several suitable substrates you can use. We prefer to use a natural substrate made specifically for Leopard geckos. Habistats Leopard gecko Bedding is a great sand/clay mix and comes recommended by us. With the correct heating/temperatures and vitamin/minerals being provided there is little to no risk of impaction. We do however recommend against loose fine desert sand (play sand) and other clearly unsuitable substrates which can pose a genuine risk to health. Please speak with one of our experts if you are unsure of the choices available.

Spot clean your tank regularly, if done properly a full tank clean should only be necessary once a month at most. Only use disinfectants specifically designed for reptiles. Soaps, detergents and other disinfectants can be toxic.

Always provide your animal with clean fresh drinking water, tap water is fine, although there are water treatments available if in doubt.

Humid hides are also essential. There are many on the market designed specifically as an enclosed hide that you can add damp substrate too. DIY is also possible by using a plastic tub with a hole cut in the side and add damp substrate. This gives the animal the required humidity it needs while also protecting the wooden vivarium from excessive moisture. Another way is to bury a plastic tray under the substrate where you

Useful tip.

Reptiles need to feel safe in their home. We don't just add tank furniture, hides etc for stimulation. Caves and hides alone are not the only way to make them feel safe. Every time you put a new log or ornament in the animals enclosure it will make your animal feel safer. It offers the animal another area it no longer needs to watch for predators and another pocket of safety. By contrast, despite the misconception that less hides means you'll see the animal more, the truth is that most will likely feel vulnerable in such an open space and fail to come out much at all. When planning your new enclosure, don't forget to allow plenty of space for furniture if you want your animal to be happy.

want your humid hide. The substrate in the tray can be moistened and a hide of your choice placed on top. The tray will protect your tank and be arranged to your liking with no unsightly plastic tub or expensive brand name item needed.

Fat tail geckos are slightly different to leopard geckos when it comes to substrate choice. It is very important to remember Fat tail geckos require a little more humidity. The easiest way to achieve this is to use Orchid bark and in a plastic or glass lined tank add some coir and/or sphagnum moss. Alternatively like with the plastic tray method mentioned above, where we talked about a humid hide for Leopard geckos. This same idea can be used here. Just put 2 or 3 trays under the orchid bark and add the bark, coir and moss to the trays. Arrange your decor accordingly, add differing levels of moisture to each tray and your new fat tail gecko can take its pick of a combination of humidity and temperature.



Helpful Hint:

Leopard geckos quite often when settled use one specific area to defecate. Place a plastic lid just under the substrate and treat like a litter tray.

Feeding And Vitamins

Variety is key, as is keeping the animal keen and actively hunting. We would suggest whole days when the animal has no access to food of any kind. Feed every 2-3 days changing the food source regularly. Crickets, Locust, Roaches and calciworms are a good staple diet, whereas mealworms and waxworms should be used sparingly.

These geckos can be very picky with their food. Quite often when presented with an abundance of food they will just eat what they fancy and wait for the next time it becomes available. Be strict! These animals have no idea what a good diet is and in a wild situation the wild dictates the available nutrition. For this reason we need to keep the animal keen to eat. So we wouldn't suggest feeding every day and we suggest only using one food type per meal. If the animal chooses not to eat this meal then substitutes should not be given. You don't want the animal to know what is coming or when. Hopefully this will keep your animal keen to eat and give them a broad and balanced diet.

The best time to feed is an evening, shortly after lights out. Your animal will be starting to think about coming out for its evening wander, if it isn't already.

Insect quantities per meal can be difficult to gauge. The best way to judge what quantity of fast moving insects constitutes as a meal is to drop into the enclosure a limited amount, say half a dozen crickets or locusts of the correct size. If your animal is hungry it will eat immediately, and if it does, continue to put a couple of insects in every time it finishes, until your gecko appears full and shows little interest in chasing the food. Remember never leave excessive amounts of crickets in the vivarium, as they can cause injury to your animal!

With mealworms and waxworms, place them in an escape proof bowl in the enclosure for 24-48 hours. Mealworms are not a great source of food despite their popularity. They contain high levels of phosphorus to calcium. Even with added calcium the levels can cause undetectable issues and as such should not make up a substantial amount of the animal's diet. It is worth pointing out that it is a complete myth that a Mealworm will eat out of your animal if not properly chewed.

A good quality vitamin and mineral supplement is essential to the well-being of your animal. Always read the packaging carefully. We recommend Earth Pro A on every meal. This is a great all round natural supplement that is impossible to overdose, so it should be abundantly added to every meal. This only works well in unison with a well thought out set up and a good quality UV source. Leopard and Fat Tail geckos also benefit from having a small bowl of this powder left in their

enclosure. Like a lot of reptiles they are pretty well adapted to know when calcium levels are dropping. As such they will self medicate by licking calcium out of a bowl when required. For further information on supplements, please refer to the Arcadia reptile website. It's stacked full of great information on this subject. Failure to maintain a good supply of vitamins and minerals will result in irreversible illness, such as Metabolic Bone Disorder.

Handling, Health And Additional Notes

Do not handle your Leopard gecko immediately after a move; leave at least four weeks to allow your animal to settle or until your animal is feeding well and has been for 3-4 weeks. If you don't, your animal may become defensive and aggressive and/or it may become reclusive and fail to feed properly. After the initial four weeks handling may begin slowly. Leopard geckos are naturally friendly. You do not need to restrain or excessively handle them to make them good pets. Always handle your animal near to a surface, accidents can happen and Leopard geckos don't fly!

Most geckos are very shy animals, so it is very important you follow these simple instructions as failure to do so will almost certainly lead to high levels of stress in your animal. A high stress level in geckos generally lowers the immune system and leaves your gecko open to viruses and infections. Always use common sense when handling animals. It is also important to remember not to touch or grab your gecko's tail. Geckos can drop their tail when they feel threatened.

When it comes to your animal's health, if you are ever in doubt ask a respected dealer for their advice, and if still in doubt go to a specialist veterinarian. There are a few simple things to look out for.

- Unusual lethargy
- Prolonged lack or loss of appetite
- Eyes sinking back into the head (dehydration)
- Eyes unclear and or sticky
- Runny nose
- Prolonged diarrhoea
- Tail losing weight
- Trouble shedding skin on extremities
- Twitching or shaking
- Abnormally forming bone structure



Avoid putting your gecko in with any other animals or each other as they are very territorial and better off living alone.

They will sometimes live with each other if the correct sex ratios are followed, but you must be prepared to separate a moments notice and provide them with a new permanent home. If purchasing a second Leopard gecko, make sure they are of compatible size and get equal amounts of food to ensure the same rate of growth. Ask a respected dealer for information.

On a final note and to summarise, Leopard and fat tail geckos are crepuscular, so you may not see a great deal of them. But they are naturally friendly in most cases, clean and easy to maintain, and in nearly all cases make great family pets.

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