

## Basic Information Sheet: Leopard Gecko

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## Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*)

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### Natural history

Leopard geckos are originally from the grassland and desert regions of India and Pakistan. The vast majority of pets are captive bred and hatched. Leopard geckos are nocturnal, terrestrial, long-lived lizards that make excellent pets.

### Taxonomy

**Class:** *Reptilia*

**Order:** *Squamata*

**Family:** *Gekkonidae*

**Color and Size**

The wild or standard type leopard gecko is yellow with a variable pattern of dark pigment that is banded in juveniles and reticulated in adults. There are also many other color and pattern morphs available including albinos, leucistic (completely pattern-free with only faint traces of yellow color), striped, and “high” yellow.

Adults are typically 16.5-20 cm (6.5-8 inches) long. Mature male geckos weigh between 60-90 grams. Females may be as light as 45 grams. At birth, leopard geckos weigh 6-8 grams.

**Diet**

- Feed leopard geckos a variety of gut-loaded or dusted insects of appropriate size such as crickets, Phoenix worms, mealworms, and superworms. May be fed the occasional pinky mouse.
- Dust the non-breeding adult’s diet with a calcium carbonate or calcium gluconate supplement once weekly, more often if the gecko is actively breeding. Calcium supplements should be devoid or low in phosphorus with a minimum Ca:P ratio of 2:1. A general vitamin/mineral supplement may also be offered once weekly.
- Feed adult geckos once daily and offer prey in late afternoon because these lizards are primarily nocturnal.
- For more information, download the client handout: [Feeding Insect Eating Reptiles](#).

## Husbandry

Temperature	Provide a temperature gradient of 70-80°F (21-27°C) and a warm area that reaches 90°F (32°C). Drop night temperatures to the 70s (21-23°C).
Humidity/water	Strive for a relative humidity of approximately 40-60%. Provide a shallow water dish and a moist hide area, but make sure the remainder of the habitat is dry.
Cage size and design	A single male requires a long, 10-15 gallon (38-57 L) aquarium at minimum.
Cage furniture/supplies	Offer leopard geckos hiding places to provide visual security. Also provide low-intensity full spectrum lighting during the day for optimal absorption of dietary calcium.

	Although leopard geckos are nocturnal exposure to UV-B light seems to be helpful. Offer rocks and logs as climbing structures for exercise.
Social structure	Males will fight each other, but can coexist well with one or more females.

## Lifespan

Leopard geckos can live 25-30 years. These species typically reach sexual maturity between 9-18 months.

## Anatomy/ physiology

Dermatologic:	Unlike snakes, lizards normally exhibit a patchy shed or “ecdysis”.
Miscellaneous:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geckos possess symmetrical, radiodense chalk sacs in the cervical region, which serve as endolymphic calcium stores.</li> <li>• In addition to fat pads within the caudoventral coelom, the healthy leopard gecko deposits significant fat</li> </ul>

	stores in its tail base.
Urogenital:	Geckos also possess a thin-walled bladder.
Sexual dimorphism:	Secondary sex characteristics of the male include larger or more distinct <a href="#">femoral pores</a> and the presence of a hemipenal bulge. The hemipenis is male copulatory organ. Femoral pores are the opening through which glands produce a thick, waxy secretion. This secretion plays a role in scent marking and other pheromone-based communication.

## Restraint

Leopard geckos utilize tail autotomy, a defense mechanism that utilizes tail loss. A vertical fracture plane of fibroconnective tissue and cartilage runs through the body and part of the neural arch of each caudal vertebrae. The tail can fall off when grasped, sometimes when very little pressure is applied. The tail will regrow as a cartilaginous rod.

## Venipuncture

Ventral tail (coccygeal) vein (see Restraint above)  
 Ventral abdominal vessel

## Preventive medicine

Regular physical examination  
Quarantine

## Important medical conditions

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Leopard geckos are relatively hardy creatures, however common presenting problems include:

- Cryptosporidiosis
- Cystic calculi
- [Dysecdysis](#) (difficult shed on toes)
- Nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism (metabolic bone disease)

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