



Leopard Geckos

Eublepharis macularius

BEGINNER • 7–10 IN ADULT • 15–25 YR LIFESPAN • CREPUSCULAR • SW ASIA

The leopard gecko has probably launched more reptile keepers than any other animal: hardy, handleable, modestly sized, and available in hundreds of morphs. It comes from rocky, dry grassland across Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwest India, hunts at dusk, and stores its savings account in its tail. Kept right, 15–25 years is a normal lifespan.

AT A GLANCE	
Ambient (day)	75–85 °F
Basking surface	90–95 °F
Night	70–75 °F
Humidity	30–40% + humid hide
UVB	Optional • Ferguson Zone 1–2
Diet	Gut-loaded insects
Feeding cadence	Every 2–3 days
Adult size	7–10 in
Lifespan	15–25 years



Leopard gecko. The fat tail is the fuel gauge: a thinning tail is your earliest warning light.

Photo: Psyon / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Temperament & Handling

Leos are everything a first lizard should be: slow, tolerant and honest. Handle close to the floor, never dangling, and cap sessions around fifteen minutes so the gecko doesn't chill. Like most geckos they can drop the tail if grabbed by it; it regrows as a stumpy replacement, so just don't create the situation. They even pick a toilet corner, which makes cleaning trivial.

02

Housing by Life Stage

A single adult wants at least a 36×18 inch floor with **three hides**: warm, cool, and a humid one in the middle. Ground-level clutter (flat stones, cork, low plants) matters more than height for this terrestrial hunter. Two males will fight; if you must cohab, don't.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	12×12×12	20×12×12	Small quarters reduce stress; paper towel floor.
Juvenile	20×12×12	24×18×12	Feeding response is strongest here; build habits now.
Subadult	24×18×12	36×18×18	Watch the tail fill out; shift toward adult cadence.
Adult	36×18×18	48×24×18	36×18 floor is the modern minimum, with three hides.

Enclosure sizes in inches, L×W×H (Habitat-OS life-stage guidance).

03

Heat

Give a warm-end surface of 90–95 °F, a cool end in the mid 70s and a night drop to 70–75 °F. Overhead halogen or a thermostat-controlled heat mat both work. Never use an unregulated heat rock; they burn bellies. Being crepuscular, leos survive without UVB when their diet carries D3, but a low-level bulb is quietly good for them.

04

Humidity & the humid hide

Ambient humidity stays desert-dry at 30–40%, but the humid hide is non-negotiable: a snug cave lined with damp sphagnum, refreshed a couple of times a week. Without it sheds dry and stick, and stuck shed on toes tightens like a tourniquet until toes are lost. Check toes at every shed; it takes ten seconds.

05

Substrate

Paper towel for hatchlings, juveniles and quarantine. Full stop. Adults do well on stone tile, compacted arid soil mixes, or a proper bioactive setup. Skip loose sand for young animals and skip calcium sand for everyone; a gecko licking up its substrate is how impactions happen. No cedar or pine shavings.

06

Feeding

Leopard geckos are strict insectivores: gut-loaded crickets, mealworms and dubia every 2–3 days, dusted with plain calcium at most feedings, plus a multivitamin weekly for youngsters and fortnightly for adults. Keep D3 to one source only: run a D3 calcium once or twice a week instead of the plain powder if you use no UVB. Waxworms are dessert, not dinner. Prey no longer than the space between the eyes.

07

Health Red Flags

Read the tail: it's the fat reserve, and a visibly thinning tail means the gecko is running on savings. Parasites, cold temps or bullying are the usual thieves. A rubbery jaw or bowed legs is calcium deficiency (MBD). Stuck shed on toes, eyes that stay squinted, and any wheeze all rate a vet trip. An adult skipping a meal is nothing; an adult losing grams is never nothing.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.