

LEOPARD GECKO CARE GUIDE

Eublepharis macularius

Bay Area Bird & Exotics Hospital

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Leopard geckos are gentle, hardy, and long-lived — with proper care they commonly reach 10–20 years. Native to the deserts and dry grasslands of South-Central Asia, they are nocturnal animals that know exactly what they want and will silently judge you for getting it wrong.



HOUSING

- Minimum enclosure: **15–20 gallon long** for one adult — more floor space is always better
- Larger enclosures required for multiple animals — do not assume they'll share gracefully
- **Only one adult male per enclosure.** They will fight. You will lose sleep.
- Top must be a screen or well-ventilated lid — airflow matters
- Safe substrate options: **paper towels, newspaper, reptile carpet, ceramic tile**, or large smooth stones
- **Never use** sand, gravel, corncob, walnut shell, or other loose substrates — intestinal impaction is a real and preventable emergency
- Provide hide boxes on both the warm and cool sides — options reduce stress
- **Humid hide:** fill with sphagnum moss, vermiculite, or a damp sponge — essential for normal shedding. Replace contents regularly. For a more natural look you can use Zoo Med's Repti Shelter or Exo Terra's Gecko or Snake Caves
- Fresh water in a shallow dish at all times — large enough for soaking, cleaned daily
- These lizards may come from a sandy area but live in rocky regions with grasses - fake or real plants should be provided as they are not only pretty to look at but provide enrichment and security. Branches, rocks and even bark can be used to spice up a dull terrarium.



TEMPERATURE & LIGHTING

Zone	Temperature
Warm side	88–90°F
Cool side	75–80°F

- Heat sources: under-tank heat pads, heat tape, or overhead heat — all acceptable with a thermostat
- Monitor enclosure temperatures routinely. “Feels warm” is not a temperature reading.
- **Never use** hot rocks or unguarded heating elements — they cause severe burns and no amount of regret fixes that
- UVB lighting: **12–14 hours daily** with a 5.0 fluorescent bulb — recommended even for nocturnal geckos

- Arcadia and ZooMed are good brands.
- Recent studies confirm leopard geckos can utilize UVB to synthesize vitamin D3 — give them the option
- See our UVB lighting handout for more detail on bulb placement and replacement schedules



FEEDING & NUTRITION

- Leopard geckos eat **live, moving insect prey** — frozen or dead insects will be ignored with great disdain
- Prey size: **no longer than the gecko's head length**, no wider than half the head width. Measure before you serve.
- Pinky mice are **not recommended** — they predispose leopard geckos to obesity. Your gecko will survive without them.

Appropriate Prey	Feeding Frequency
Crickets	Juveniles: every 1–2 days
Mealworms	Adults: 2–3 times per week
Dubia roaches	
Silkworms	
Superworms	
Waxworms (occasional treat only)	

- Offer **4–6 insects** per feeding over a **15-minute window** — then stop. These geckos have no off switch.



GUT LOADING & SUPPLEMENTS

- Gut-load all insects on a high-quality, calcium-rich diet for at least **12–24 hours** before feeding — well-fed bugs make well-fed geckos
- See our Gut Loading Handout for recommended brands and details

Supplement	Frequency	Notes
Plain calcium carbonate (no added vitamins)	At least 3x per week	Can also offer free-choice in a small dish
Reptile multivitamin with vitamin A (retinol, not beta-carotene)	Once or twice monthly	Replace one calcium dusting with this



ROUTINE VETERINARY CARE

- All new leopard geckos should see an experienced exotic animal veterinarian **shortly after purchase** — not eventually, shortly
- Fecal exam for parasites at the initial visit — wild-caught and captive-bred animals alike
- New geckos must be quarantined away from other reptiles for **at least 30 days**

- Regular wellness visits help prevent disease and support a long, healthy life — annual exams are the standard



IMPORTANT ZOO NOTIC INFORMATION

Most reptiles, including leopard geckos, can carry Salmonella bacteria without appearing ill. Always wash hands thoroughly after handling your gecko or anything from their enclosure. Leopard geckos are not recommended for very young children or individuals with compromised immune systems.

Questions? We've heard weirder ones. Call us.

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