

## Leopard Gecko

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The Leopard Gecko is one of the easiest lizards to care for. They need very little in the way of electrical equipment, and their housing is easy to maintain. Leopard Geckos are small and easy to handle. They are nocturnal, and though they spend most of the day hiding, they can be observed during their active periods at night.

### Species Profile: Leopard Gecko

**Scientific Name:** *Eublepharis macularius*

**Natural Environment:** Southern Asia (Pakistan to Northwest India)

**Average Size:** 6" - 9" long; the males have a slightly larger, heavier build than the females.

**Average Life Span:** 15 to 20 years, though some have lived up to 30 years.

**Appearance:** The Leopard Gecko has small, knob-like bumps over its entire body that give it the appearance of being very rough. However, its skin is actually soft to the touch. It has a triangular head and, when healthy, a large fat tail. The tail is where the Leopard Gecko stores its fat and is usually indicative of the gecko's health.

The Leopard Gecko is generally leucistic (no color) or pale yellow with dark brown spots. Young Leopard Geckos start out with alternating bands of color that develop into spots or splotches as they age. There are, however, many different Leopard Gecko color morphs. Some of the most common color variations include yellow, brown, white, and leucistic (with black eyes).

#### Habitat

<b>Size:</b>	A 10-gallon terrarium is sufficient for one Leopard Gecko. Two Leopard Geckos would need a 15-gallon terrarium, and three would need a 20-gallon terrarium. The terrarium should be long and shallow because Leopard Geckos don't climb very well.
<b>Lighting:</b>	Leopard Geckos are nocturnal, so UV lighting is not essential. Red bulbs ( <a href="#">day or night</a> ), black bulbs ( <a href="#">day or night</a> ) or <a href="#">ceramic heaters</a> can be used to provide heat or for nighttime viewing. Bright white or daytime lights can stress your Leopard Gecko and should not be used.
<b>Temperature:</b>	<p>Keep the tank at 80° to 85°F during the day with a basking area (directly under the light bulb) of 90°F. At night, the tank temperature should be in the 70's. Under tank heaters (UTH) are the preferred method of heating Leopard Gecko habitats because they warm the environment from the bottom of the substrate up.</p> <p>The terrarium should have a temperature gradient with a 10°F variance. The cool end of the gradient should fall into the 70's to low 80's and the warm end of the gradient should rise between 80° to 90°F. Leopard Geckos will use the temperature gradient to regulate their body temperature by moving from one side of the temperature gradient to the other.</p>
<b>Humidity:</b>	Leopard Geckos need a humidity of approximately 40% to 60% to encourage proper shedding. If the humidity is too low, place moist peat moss in a hide box or <a href="#">shelter</a> , and mist it periodically.
<b>Housing:</b>	This species does not climb very well, but you must provide a number of hiding spots, such as hideboxes with small openings and caves, for its daytime periods. Rocks and logs should be added to the terrarium to provide places for exercise. Leopard Geckos can be kept in groups of two or three, but there should only be one male per terrarium, as male Leopard Geckos are extremely territorial.
<b>Substrate:</b>	Artificial <a href="#">turf</a> , paper toweling, slate tile, newspaper, commercial terrarium sand <a href="#">substrates</a> , or commercial terrarium clay <a href="#">substrates</a> .

**Diet/Feeding:**

The main component of this species' diet is [crickets](#) coated with vitamin and mineral supplements. They should also be fed mealworms and grubs, and pinky mice can be fed to adults once a week. Juveniles should be fed daily, and adults should be fed once every other day. A small dish of calcium should be in the tank at all times. Adults will need a calcium/Vitamin D supplement every other feeding and a reptile multivitamin once a week. Leopard Geckos need a steady supply of water that should be changed daily.

**Behavior/Interaction:**

Leopard Geckos are not the friendliest of the geckos, but they are not averse to short periods of regular handling. Extensive handling is not recommended though, especially with juveniles. They naturally like to hide throughout the majority of the day, but they will be inquisitive and fun to observe while they are active. If handled and cared for properly, they are fairly docile.

**Interesting Facts:**

Unlike many other herps, Leopard Geckos have eyelids. They have no clinging toe pads, so they can't climb vertical surfaces. If picked up by the tail, it will break off. Leopard Geckos move or wiggle their tail slightly when they are preparing to hunt their meal.

