

# Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic

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## Care of Leopard Geckos

### **Housing:**

- Leopard geckos are solitary and should be housed alone. Twenty gallon aquariums with screen tops make excellent enclosures.
- Substrate: Reptile carpeting, paper towel, or newspapers should be used as substrate. Mulch, sand, or wood shavings should be avoided as they are difficult to keep clean and may be ingested when the animal is hunting, resulting in impactions. Even sand that is marketed as being “digestible” can cause impactions.
- Heat: Heat should be provided using a heat lamp, as under-tank heaters or hot rocks can result in thermal burns. The warm side should be maintained at 85-90°F, while the cool side should be maintained at 75°-80°F. Temperatures can drop into the mid 70’s at night, but sustained temperatures below 75°F can cause geckos to go into a semi-hibernation state and stop eating.
- Humidity: Humidity is important to promote proper shedding. We recommend providing a humid hide, which is a small house-like structure (such as a small plastic container set upside down with an entrance cut into the side) that provides a focal area of increased humidity. Place a wet paper towel or peat-moss under the humidity hide and maintain its moisture by misting. The moisture of the substrate provides the humidity that geckos need in order to shed properly.
- UVB: Many reptiles require UVB light to make Vitamin D. Because leopard geckos are not active during the day, they may not require UVB supplementation and may have damage to their skin with prolonged UVB exposure. However, recent studies suggest that leopard geckos may benefit from brief exposure to low levels of UVB in the morning and the evening.

### **Diet:**

- Leopard geckos in the wild eat many different species of insects, so we recommend feeding a variety of live insects. The most readily available are crickets, meal worms, and superworms, but a wider variety can be purchased online or from specialty stores.
- Insects should be dusted daily with calcium and weekly with a multivitamin. Many insects will groom off the supplement if given time, so only feed as many insects as your gecko can eat in 15-30 minutes.
- A shallow bowl or lid should be used for water in the leopard gecko’s enclosure.

### **Other Care:**

- Never pick leopard geckos up by the tail; it can break off. During the time of tail re-growth, leopard geckos are more susceptible to disease and infection. Leopard geckos store water, fat, and nutrients in their tails since they are desert dwellers. The loss of the tail results in loss of this storage.
- We recommend that you weigh your gecko weekly to monitor for changes that might indicate that your gecko needs to see a veterinarian.