



## EUBLEPHARIS MACULARIUS

Leopard geckos are a species of ground-dwelling geckos native to parts of South Asia, including regions of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. They are part of the family Eublepharidae, which is distinct from other geckos because they have moveable eyelids (unlike other geckos which have fused eyelids). This feature makes them stand out compared to other geckos.

Leopard geckos are named for their spotted patterns, resembling the markings of a leopard, although their appearance can vary. They come in a variety of colors, including yellow, orange, and white, and can have different morphs, such as albino or hypo-melanistic, giving them a diverse range of visual appeal.



## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Size:** Adult leopard geckos typically grow between 7 to 10 inches (18 to 25 cm) long. Males are generally slightly larger than females.
- **Lifespan:** With proper care, leopard geckos can live anywhere from 15 to 20 years, and some have been known to live even longer.
- **Temperament:** They are known for their docile and calm temperament. Unlike some reptiles, they do not exhibit aggression, and they generally tolerate handling well, making them excellent pets for beginners.
- **Ecdysis:** Most leopard geckos shed every four to eight weeks. After a shed cycle, leopard geckos will often eat their shed skin to regain some of its nutrients. Before shedding their skin, leopard geckos turn a whitish-gray color.
- **Crepuscular:** Leopard geckos are crepuscular (most active at dawn and dusk), you will often find them hiding under rocks or burrowed under substrate during the day.

## HABITAT SETUP

Creating a proper enclosure is critical for a leopard gecko's health and happiness.

- **Terrarium Size:** A 20-gallon tank is sufficient for one adult leopard gecko, though larger enclosures (like a 30-gallon) can be used for multiple geckos or if you want to provide more space for them to explore.



- **Substrate:** The floor of their habitat is important. Options like reptile carpet, paper towels, or tile are safe. Slate tiles are a popular and practical choice as they offer good heat retention and a naturalistic look, and are easy to clean. Alternatively, unglazed ceramic tiles or porcelain tiles can also be used, they provide a solid surface and are relatively easy to maintain. If using sand, feed geckos in a separate enclosure, this reduces the chance of them ingesting the substrate while eating. Avoid crushed walnut shells, which can lead to serious health issues if ingested.
- **Temperature:** Leopard geckos are ectothermic (cold-blooded), meaning they rely on external heat sources to regulate their body temperature. You should provide a heat gradient:
  - **Warm side:** The temperature on the warm side of the tank should be around 88-92°F (31-33°C).
  - **Cool side:** The cool side should range between 70-75°F (21-24°C).
  - A heat mat or under-tank heater works well to achieve this gradient. Avoid using heat rocks, as they can burn the gecko.
- **Basking Spot:** Provide a designated area on the warm side for your gecko to bask. This spot should have a temperature of about 95°F (35°C).
- **UVB Lighting:** While leopard geckos don't require UVB light like some reptiles, providing it is still beneficial for their overall health. It helps with the absorption of calcium and can contribute to their well-being, especially in terms of bone health. Aim for about 8-12 hours of light per day.
- **Humidity:** Leopard geckos thrive in a dry environment, so humidity should be relatively low (around 30-40%). However, you should provide a humid hide—a small, enclosed space with some moist substrate (such as damp paper towels) for your gecko to shed its skin.

## DIET AND FEEDING

Leopard geckos are insectivores, meaning their diet consists mainly of insects. Providing a varied and balanced diet is key to their health.

### Types of Food

Leopard geckos primarily consume live insects, but there are various types of insects and other food sources that can be provided to them in captivity:

#### Crickets

- **Nutritional Value:** Crickets are one of the most common food items for leopard geckos. They provide good protein and are relatively easy to find.
- **Feeding Tips:** Crickets should be gut-loaded (fed nutritious food) before being offered to the gecko. This ensures that the gecko gets the nutrients it needs from the crickets.



- **Size Considerations:** The size of the crickets should be appropriate for the size of the gecko, typically no larger than the width of the gecko's head to avoid choking hazards.

#### **Mealworms**

- **Nutritional Value:** Mealworms are another staple food source. They are high in fat, so they should be offered in moderation to prevent obesity.
- **Feeding Tips:** Like crickets, mealworms should also be gut-loaded with nutritious food to improve their nutritional value before feeding them to the gecko.
- **Variety:** While mealworms are a good option, they shouldn't be the only insect in the gecko's diet due to their fat content.

#### **Dubia Roaches**

- **Nutritional Value:** Dubia roaches are a nutritious alternative to crickets and mealworms. They are rich in protein and low in fat, which makes them ideal for leopard geckos.
- **Feeding Tips:** Like crickets and mealworms, Dubia roaches should be gut-loaded before feeding to ensure they are nutritionally balanced.
- **Size Considerations:** Dubia roaches are available in various sizes, so it's important to choose appropriately sized ones for your gecko.

#### **Waxworms**

- **Nutritional Value:** Waxworms are high in fat and can be used as a treat rather than a regular part of the diet. They are especially appealing to geckos due to their fatty content, but they should be fed sparingly to avoid weight gain.
- **Feeding Tips:** Waxworms can be offered occasionally for variety or to entice a gecko that is being picky about food. They should not be a primary food source.

#### **Superworms**

- **Nutritional Value:** Superworms are larger than mealworms and are high in protein and fat. Like mealworms, they should be fed in moderation to prevent excessive fat intake.
- **Feeding Tips:** Superworms should be gut-loaded and dusted with calcium powder before feeding. Due to their size, they should be fed to larger geckos.

#### **Silkworms and Hornworms**

- **Nutritional Value:** Both silkworms and hornworms are excellent sources of protein, low in fat, and rich in moisture, making them very hydrating for geckos. These insects are great for maintaining a well-rounded diet.
- **Feeding Tips:** These can be a great occasional addition to their diet but may be harder to find than crickets or mealworms.



## Supplements

While insects are a key part of a leopard gecko's diet, providing appropriate supplements is crucial to ensure they get all the essential vitamins and minerals they need, especially calcium and vitamin D3.

### Calcium

- **Importance:** Calcium is vital for bone health and preventing metabolic bone disease (MBD), a common health issue in reptiles that lack sufficient calcium.
- **How to Feed:** Dust insects with calcium powder before feeding. This helps ensure the gecko receives enough calcium, especially since leopard geckos do not receive enough from their diet alone.
- **Calcium Without Vitamin D3:** Generally, calcium powder without vitamin D3 should be used most of the time, as they can absorb vitamin D3 from UVB light (though they do not need it as much as other reptiles).

### Vitamin D3

- **Importance:** Vitamin D3 helps leopard geckos absorb calcium properly. If the gecko is not getting UVB light, vitamin D3 supplementation is essential to prevent deficiencies.
- **How to Feed:** Vitamin D3 should be dusted on insects once or twice a week, depending on the amount of UVB exposure the gecko gets. Over-supplementing vitamin D3 can be harmful, so it should be used sparingly.

### Multivitamin Supplements

- **Importance:** Multivitamins provide other essential nutrients, such as vitamin A and B vitamins, that may not be adequately supplied by insects alone.
- **How to Feed:** A multivitamin supplement should be dusted on insects once or twice a week to ensure the gecko gets a balanced range of nutrients.

## How Often to Feed

The frequency of feeding depends on the age and size of the leopard gecko:

### Juveniles (4-12 months old)

Juveniles (up to 12 months old): They have faster metabolisms and need to eat more often. Typically, they should be fed daily, with a variety of insects.

- **Feeding Frequency:** Every day
- **Portion Size:** 6-10 medium-sized insects per feeding

### Adults (12 months and older)

Adult leopard geckos have slower metabolisms and are no longer growing. Feeding them too often can lead to obesity, which can cause health issues.



- **Feeding Frequency:** 2-3 times per week
- **Portion Size:** 6-10 large insects per feeding

### Hydration

While leopard geckos primarily get their hydration from the food they eat, it is still essential to provide fresh water at all times. Place a shallow water dish in the gecko's enclosure and change the water regularly to ensure it remains clean. Insects like hornworms and silkworms can provide some additional moisture.

### SHEDDING

Leopard geckos shed their skin regularly, especially when they are growing.

- **Humid Hide:** Make sure they have access to a humid hide (as mentioned before) to help them shed properly. If the humidity is too low, they may have trouble shedding, which could lead to retained skin, especially around the toes.
- **Assistance:** If a gecko has trouble shedding, you may need to gently assist by soaking it in a shallow dish of lukewarm water and then gently rubbing off the stuck skin.

### HANDLING AND INTERACTION

Leopard geckos are typically quite docile, but it's essential to handle them gently and not too often, especially if they are still young or adjusting to their new home. When picking them up:

- **Support their body:** Use both hands to support their body fully and avoid grabbing them by the tail.
- **Tail Dropping:** If a gecko feels threatened, it can drop its tail as a defense mechanism. While it's not harmful and the tail will regenerate, it's important to avoid stressing them out too much.
- **Easily handled:** Most adult Leopard Geckos will settle down considerably and become quite docile and easily handled.
- **Wash Hands:** *Always be sure to wash your hands after handling your gecko.*

### CARE

Keep an eye out for common health issues like:

- **Impaction:** Caused by ingesting inappropriate substrates or eating too much food without digesting properly. Symptoms include lethargy and lack of appetite.
- **MBD (Metabolic Bone Disease):** This is caused by a calcium deficiency and can lead to deformities. Ensure you are providing proper calcium supplementation.



- **Parasites:** Internal parasites can affect a gecko's health. If your gecko shows signs of weight loss, lethargy, or changes in stool, consult a vet.

### Daily

- Water bowl should be cleaned daily, refilling with dechlorinated water.
- Lightly mist the habitat at least twice during the day to maintain necessary humidity levels. Tank humidity should ideally stay between 60% and 80%.
- Check both thermometers to confirm the temperature is within the acceptable range of 72°F to 78°F.
- Spot clean the habitat, removing any debris or dead food.

### Monthly

Change the habitat's substrate monthly. You will need to remove your leopard gecko, gently picking it up and placing it in a suitable container, always wear disposable gloves when cleaning habitat.

Thoroughly scrub the habitat with a mixture of 10% bleach and 90% hot water **or** distilled vinegar 50% and water 50%. Clean any décor with same solution. Rinse habitat two to three times with tap water to completely remove any cleaning residue. Wipe habitat and décor dry with paper towels. Add new substrate and décor back to the habitat. Replace the water dish and place your leopard gecko back into its habitat.

## HELPFUL LINKS

### Calcium Supplement:

<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/vitamins-supplements-care/calcium-supplement-spray>  
<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/vitamins-supplements-care/vitamin-spray>

### Food Sources:

[https://www.hikari.info/herptile/h\\_02.html](https://www.hikari.info/herptile/h_02.html)  
<https://zoomed.com/leopard-gecko-food/>  
<https://zoomed.com/leopard-gecko-sampler-value-pack/>  
<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/food/gut-load-cricket-drink>

### Lighting and Basking Heat Lamp:

<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/lighting-heating/low-profile-g9-fixtures>  
<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/heat-emitters/heat-mat>



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# CARE SHEET **LEOPARD GECKO**

<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/lighting-heating/mini-compact-fluorescent-bulbs>

**Decor:**

[https://www.exo-terra.com/en/products/forest\\_branch.php](https://www.exo-terra.com/en/products/forest_branch.php)

<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/decor/rock-dens>

<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/decor/bark-bends>

**Live Food:**

<https://www.petsmart.com/reptile/food/live-waxworms-58954.html>

<https://www.petsmart.com/reptile/food/superworms-50-ct-92440.html>

<https://www.petco.com/shop/en/petcostore/product/silkworms>

<https://www.petco.com/shop/en/petcostore/product/hornworms-cup>

<https://www.flukerfarms.com/live-crickets/>

<https://www.flukerfarms.com/dubia-roaches>

<https://www.petsmart.com/reptile/food/live-crickets-30390.html>

<https://flukerfarms.com/live-mealworms/>

<https://www.petsuppliesplus.com/categories/reptile/food/feeders-live-food/crickets/30865?sku=000000770224>