

## **Your New Leopard Gecko - A Guide to it's Care**

By Rachel Maier MRCVS  
Parkvets Veterinary Hospital

Congratulations on the new addition to your family. This is an exciting time for everyone and we hope that you will have many happy years together. This handout covers some of the basic facts about keeping a Leopard Gecko. Please read it carefully; if you have any further questions please ask a member of staff.

### **Species Name**

Eublepharis macularis

### **Family Relationships**

Eublepharidae (geckos with eyelids): Sauria (lizards): Reptilia (reptiles).

### **Place of Origin**

Arid areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan and W. India

### **Housing**

Two adult males should NEVER be housed together as they will fight, sometimes to the point of death. Females or a male with more than one female, can be kept together. 2-3 individuals per cage are a good number.

Leopard Geckos are best kept in purpose-built reptile vivariums or glass aquarium tanks with special vivarium tops.

Leopard geckos are active at dawn and dusk, and sleep during the day. They do not require ultraviolet light. Being from warm arid regions, they need heat. An under tank heat mat can be left on at night to provide background heat. A heating light bulb can be used in the day time at the hot end. Temperature during the day should be about 84-88 deg F at the basking end, dropping by about 10 deg at night.

They need a moist hide in order to shed properly – this hide can be lined with moist sphagnum moss. Other hides in the tank will allow the geckos to conceal themselves – important to avoid them becoming stressed. Sand is an ideal floor substrate.

The tank should not be near a draft or next to a heat source such as a radiator. It should also be away from bright lights late at night as these will disturb the geckos.

### **Suggested Feeding Guidelines**

Leopard Geckos eat mainly insects, although they will also eat some other invertebrates (creatures without backbones). They will ignore plant matter, although some may lick fruit based baby food or soft banana. Geckos will only eat live food – dead insects are no use to them.

The most readily available food is crickets, which are sold in various sizes. For the largest Leopard Gecko 4th 'instar' crickets are the largest that should be fed, and 3rd are better for smaller adults. The crickets should be no more than the length, and less than half the width, of the gecko's head. The crickets should be fed themselves with a suitable meal usually 12-24 hours beforehand before being fed in turn to the geckos, after being dusted with a calcium-vitamin supplement.

As a rule Leopards can be fed once every 2-3 days as adults or daily as young geckos. Each lizard should be offered about 4-10 crickets. As the crickets start to move, the leopards will be attracted by the movement and seize them. It is best to offer food after dusk.

Other foods should be offered sparingly, if at all. Leopard Geckos (like most lizards) enjoy wax worms, but these are fattening and should only be a treat. Mealworms will also be taken but are less digestible and nutritionally valuable than crickets, and should normally never be a main part of the diet for most lizards. Locusts and silkworms may also be offered to adults. For a few weeks in winter, Leopards may not eat well. This is probably part of the yearly cycle. Afterwards they will normally show an even better appetite.

A small bowl or dish of water should always be available.

### **Handling**

Leopard geckos are not keen on being picked up, but if you place your hand in the cage and remain still, they are often curious and will come and lick your fingers and quite often climb up your arm. After a while they will usually return to the cage.

If you must pick up a leopard gecko, try to allow it to walk onto the palm of an upturned hand. When you lift it out, be sure not to let it fall, and if it seems panicky restrain it with the other hand.

An upset Leopard will wriggle and probably try to bite. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling any reptile.

### **Miscellaneous**

Leopards are a good first reptile pet and a good way to gain experience with lizards. Additional information can be found in "The Leopard Gecko Manual" by Philippe de Vosjoli and co. [ISBN-10: 1882770625](#).

### **Emergency Service**

Parkvets has a vet on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In the event of an emergency, day or night, you should always telephone your usual Parkvets clinic and you will be given the appropriate information on what to do. Alternatively, call the emergency number 020 8300 8111

### **And Finally**

We hope that you will have lots of fun and pleasure from your leopard gecko over the coming years. We trust he or she will enjoy good health and hope we can help you to achieve this.

Should you need further advice about the health or welfare of your leopard gecko then please contact us at the practice.

### **Special Offer for Ruxley Manor Garden Centre Customers**

For your peace of mind Parkvets have teamed up with Ruxley Manor Garden Centre to offer you a 10% discount on your Leopard Gecko's first health check up. Visit our website at [www.parkvets.com](http://www.parkvets.com) to find a Parkvets clinic near you.

You should obtain a voucher from Ruxley Manor Garden Centre and present it plus your receipt to Parkvets to claim your discount.