

Species Care Series

Presented by the Alaska Herpetological Society

Welcome and Introduction

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<https://www.akherpsociety.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/akherpsociety>



Leopard Geckos

What does it mean to own one?

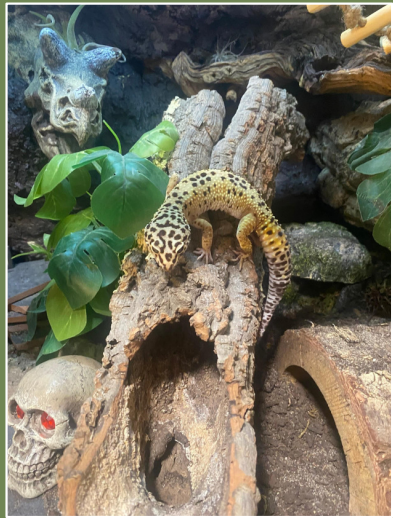


What should you consider prior to getting a leopard gecko:

SO YOU WANT TO GET A LEOPARD GECKO??

Leopard Geckos lifespan can be more than 20 years, are you ready for that commitment?

These are not a pet for a child, if you do get one your child can be involved, but ultimately it is the adult's responsibility to care for the pet.

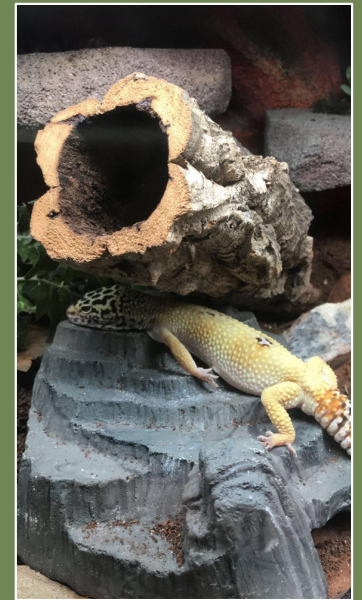


A proper habitat can be spendy, are you prepared for the expense?

Are you willing to buy from an ethical breeder or adopt locally?

Do you know your local exotic vets, and are you prepared for unexpected costs?

Other considerations: Pet personalities matter, some might bite, are you looking for a handle-able pet or content with a display pet, will you be feeding live bugs, no co-habbing, etc.



Leopard Geckos are not a pet that wants, needs or typically loves to be handled.



Some leos will allow you to hold them, but this is a trust that must be earned.

Note that their tails can fall off and since leos store most of their fat there, they will get sick if they lose their tail. The tail will grow back, but will not look the same.

Image by Derptiles

Leopard Gecko Enclosure

- Ideal enclosure size encourages leopard geckos to explore and exercise
- Highly recommended that adult geckos be housed in no smaller than a 36"X18"x18" enclosure (4.5 sq ft of floor space or 40 gallons)
- Glass aquarium, PVC enclosure, wood, or plastic tub.
- Decor can include vines, driftwood, tunnels, etc

EXO TERRA 36x18x18



REPTI ZOO 36x18x18



Enclosure cont.



Bruni
basking
under
her DHP

Safe Substrates

- Solid Substrates such as paper towels and Non-adhesive self lines are the safest options
- Dried Sphagnum moss can be used in the humid hide to provide a spot to dig and assist in shedding
- Loose substrate can also be a great option when used with caution and by knowledgeable keepers
- NEVER use sand, calci-sand, crushed walnut, or sand mats!!!

Temperature and Humidity

- Humidity - 30-40%
 - A humid hide can be placed on the cold side for shedding
- Hot Side Temperature - 88-92
 - A “hot spot” can be made with che, dhp, or halogen bulbs over a piece of slate
- Ambient Temperature- 75 or room temp
- Heat Mats can also be used but no longer recommended

Leopard Gecko Enclosure - Level Up!

A great source of information and support is the “[Reptile Lighting](#)” group on facebook.

This is a bioactive example of four leos in 4x2x2 enclosures from that group.

Dubia Enclosure.



Diet and Safe Feeding

What do leopard geckos eat?

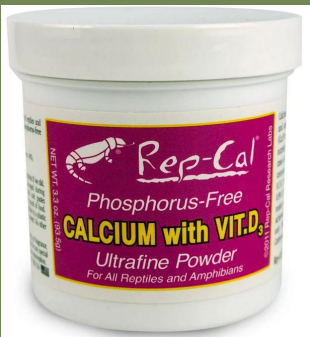
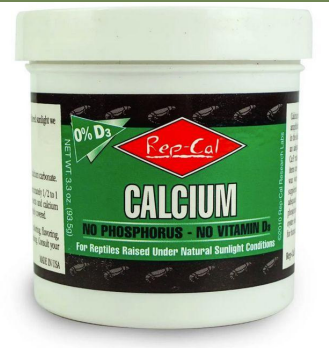
- Staple food can be Roaches, mealworms, crickets, bsf larvae
- Adult leopard geckos can eat every 3-4 day while juveniles should eat every 1-2
- Supplements are important!
- Insects should be dusted with both Calcium and vitamins with/without D3
- Treats can include wax worms, hornworms, and butter worms

| Leopard Gecko Feeder Guide | | | |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|----------|
| | Protein | Fat | Moisture |
| Dubia roaches | 20-23% | 6-7% | 65-71% |
| Crickets | 15-19% | 2-3% | 62-71% |
| Silkworms | 9-13% | 1-2% | 72-77% |
| Mealworms | 18-19% | 19% | 59-62% |
| Superworms | 19-22% | 15-18% | 58-60% |
| Giant mealworms | 15-19% | 17-21% | 59-62% |
| Hornworms | 8-9% | 3% | 85% |
| Butterworms | 15-16% | 17-29% | 60-62% |
| Waxworms | 14-15% | 22-25% | 58-61% |

By Hailey Thompson

Diseases caused by inadequate diet and wrong substrate choice:

- Metabolic Bone Disease (MDB)
- Impaction



Initial Setup Costs

Basic Setup vs Advanced Setup, Pros and Cons of each

| | <u>Basic</u> | <u>Advanced</u> |
|--|---|---|
| Enclosure | 36x18x18 tank runs between \$200-\$300, unless you can find used. CON: Prone to breaking/cracking, humidity can be difficult to regulate. | 4x2x2 PVC enclosure runs \$300-\$500, but will last the life of the pet |
| Heating & Lighting | 75w DHP or CHE in a dome. Deep dome fixture \$10-20. DHP \$20 (online) to \$40+ in store. UVB fixture & bulb \$100 (Arcadia, Reptisun, or Leap Habitat) | |
| Temperature & Humidity Controls | \$20-\$40+ Manual IR Temp Gun \$10+ Digital readout thermostat/humidity gauge. | Thermostat examples: \$200+Herpstat, \$30-\$35 Zoo Med, \$30 InkBird, \$20-\$25 ReptiZoo. |
| Furniture | Hides/caves (at least 2) plus a moist hide, logs, <i>\$10+/each likely spend ~\$100</i> | branches, rocks, vines, etc. |
| Supplements | Calcium w/D, Calcium noD, Multivitamin (\$26.97 bundle on Josh's Frog) | |
| Misc | Spray bottle, tongs, food cups/dishes. | |

Safe vs Unsafe Products

Safe Products



Unsafe Products



Cleaning & Medical Supplies

How to clean reptile decor: vinegar-water to disinfect, boiling wood products or use vet-safe products (Chlorhexidine, F10).



Medical supplies to keep on hand:

Triple antibiotic (plain, no pain relief additives), q-tips, etc. Iodine, 72 hr hot packs.



Quarantine enclosure for new leos, injuries or shedding problems. 20g with paper towels or a bin

Evacuation Emergency Kit

Loss of power is a factor for Alaska and you need to be prepared to evacuate your pet if loss of power happens. You cannot just put a reptile in a bin and take them outside when temps fall below safe levels; they need to be put into something with heat and that will hold heat for them.



Example of a setup that would keep your pet warm inside a home when power is out and the inside temps drop and/or you need to move to a different location until power is restored.



Bruni's Enclosure

- 36"x18"x18" Dubia Roach Enclosure
- Loose substrate is a safe bioactive mix - 40% Soil, 40% Sand, 20% Worm Castings
 - Powder blue isopods, powder orange isopods, giant canyon isopods, and springtails are the clean up crew
- Heating is a 75w Deep heat project
- Uvb is a 5.0 Zoo med bulb



Metabolic Bone Disease

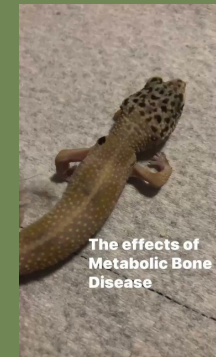
M.B.D is a life threatening disease and is 100% preventable!

Causes/Symptoms

- Causes by a lack of calcium and Vitamin D3
- Signs includes, deformed arms/legs, weak jaw, lethargy, loss of appetite, inability to lift chest off ground



X-ray shows scoot, a rescue with m.b.d.
Healthy bones should show clearly on an x ray.



Other Illnesses

- Includes- impacted eye caps, stuck shed, parasites, cryptosporidium(stick tail)
- If your gecko experiences loose stool, lethargy, loss of appetite, weight loss, seek vet attention!

Prevention

M.b.d is easily preventable with proper husbandry and diet. A varied diet of live bugs and a proper supplement schedule with calcium and vitamin D3 are the best prevention. A 5.0 UVB can also be used to promote proper calcium and D3 absorption.

How to adapt a home to a rehabbed leo with MBD

Scoots Enclosure

- Does not include and climbing/obstacles
- Non Adhesive shelf liner with paper towels underneath to cushion joints
- Water bowl is a coaster with deep grooves

Expenses (not including set up/standard expenses)

- Initial cost
 - Emergency exam- \$150
 - Medication- \$50+
 - Supplemented food- \$11
- Reoccurring Vet visits every 6-12 months
 - Cost of exotic exam - \$85
 - An X-ray is done every visit- \$200+



PROPER HUSBANDRY PREVENTS SICKNESS & DEATH

*There are no licensed reptile rescues in the Interior. **

** Fairbanks North Star Borough Animal Control & Shelter does accept surrenders if they have space.*

Some advanced keepers take in rescue cases and will rehab and sometime rehome, but this is all done on an individual basis and at the individual's expense!

Three reptile-specific rescues in the southeast that did or do take in reptiles, including leos:

- Crazy Beardie Lady Rescue
- Collectasaur
- Jonathan's Reptiles *(no longer accepting surrenders)*

Reptile Rescues Surrender Statistics: Jonathan's Reptiles

* (no longer accepting surrenders)

2021

107 Surrenders total



2022

64 surrenders total

- 10 leopard geckos

Additionally, the number of surrenders does not include how many animals they had to turn away because we were at capacity or were limiting to just those that required rehabilitation. Apparently, that number is much higher, but was not tracked.



90% of reptiles who were surrendered had health concerns directly related to husbandry.

Reptile Rescues Surrender Statistics: Jonathan's Reptiles

* (no longer accepting surrenders)



Of the 10 surrendered in 2022

- 4 required extensive rehabilitation
- 1 required some rehabilitation
- 3 were healthy
- 2 did not survive

**Of the 8 that survived, 6 found forever homes
and 2 are still looking for their forever family.**



90% of reptiles who were surrendered had health concerns directly related to husbandry.

Reptile Rescues Surrender Statistics:

Crazy Beardie Lady Rescue

- 2023: 10 leos
- 2024: between 14-16 (just through Sept!)

- Of those from 2024:
 - 10 have some degree of MBD
 - 4 currently with shed/eye issues and being hand fed
 - 1 is terribly underweight
 - 1 was burned and scratched badly and xx were healthy
 - 1 was very thin, but now eating again

 - One passed within 12 hours of being surrendered.



Currently has 3 for adoption



Reptile Rescues Surrender Statistics:

Collectasaur



- Currently has 3 leos for adoption
- Since starting six-to-eight months ago has taken in 11 leos.
- Of those, 4 needed rehab and 7 were healthy. Those that were not healthy had primarily eye issues.



Cohabitation of leopard geckos is never acceptable

Leos might get along for a short time, but ultimately there will be fighting over resources (best sleeping spots, basking areas, etc).

LEOS
DO NOT
“NEED A FRIEND”

Before



This poor little leopard gecko was being housed with another male that was literally tearing him apart. The owner of the geckos contacted me and I advised her to separate the males to avoid one being killed until I could go pick them up. About two weeks later she called and said that they were still fighting and one looked like it was dying... I asked if she had separated them and she said no. I then got a friend who lived in the same town as her to go pick him up and end this torture... In my opinion, this person should never own a pet as she was deliberately putting this lizard in a deadly situation.

As you can see by the pictures below, he is doing MUCH better now!

After



Photo credit to heackyeahgeckos on tumbler

Questions?

Use our facebook page for questions:

<https://www.facebook.com/akherpsociety>

Care sheets:

<https://reptifiles.com/leopard-gecko-care/>

Join the **Leopard Gecko Club** (FB group) :

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/689327087907681/>

Join the **Leopard Gecko - Advancing Husbandry** (FB group) :

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/leopardgeckoadvancinghusbandry>

Great Youtube channel dedicated to Leopard Gecko care:

<https://www.youtube.com/leopardgeckotalk>

Sources, Citations

Vendors that will reliably ship to the Interior:

- <https://dubiaroaches.com/>
- <https://joshsfrogs.com/>
- <https://reptilianarts.com/>
- <https://beanfarm.com/>
- <https://www.alaskafeederfarm.com/> (great place if you are down south!)

Thanks to Jonathan's Reptiles, Crazy Beardie Lady Rescue and Collectasaur for providing rescue & rehab stats for this presentation.

Jonathan's Reptiles website also has a great [Emergency Preparedness](https://www.jonathansreptiles.com/emergency-preparedness.html) page:
<https://www.jonathansreptiles.com/emergency-preparedness.html>