CARE GUIDE

Leopard Gecko Care Guide

Eublepharis macularius

Written by Zac Parpart of Parpart's Pristine Pythons · Last reviewed April 14, 2026



Introduction

Leopard Gecko Care Guide

This comprehensive guide is compiled from recommendations and experiences shared by members of the reptile community, including seasoned breeders and keepers. It was carefully compiled and prepared by Zac Parpart of Parpart's Pristine Pythons using years of hands-on experience and widely accepted husbandry practices. It is intended as a detailed reference for both new and experienced owners. Practices may vary slightly between keepers, but this guide reflects widely accepted care standards.

Leopard geckos are widely kept because they are hardy, manageable, and adapt well to captivity when their basic needs are met consistently. Success with this species comes from stable temperatures, secure housing, a functional humid hide, safe substrate, proper feeding, and consistent supplementation.

This guide is written primarily for pet Leopard gecko care and long-term animal welfare. Breeding setups and colony management may differ, but the standards outlined here reflect practical, widely accepted husbandry for

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individual pet animals.

Species Basics

Scientific Name: *Eublepharis macularius*

Common Names: Leopard gecko

Native Range: Middle East through parts of India

Natural Habitat: Rocky grasslands, scrubland, and semi-arid regions

Lifestyle: Terrestrial, crepuscular to nocturnal

Average Adult Size:

1. Males: 7–10 inches
2. Females: 7–8 inches
3. Giant lines may grow larger

Lifespan:

1. Commonly 6–10 years
2. Many well-kept Leopard geckos live 15–20+ years

Experience Level: Excellent beginner reptile that remains rewarding for experienced keepers

Before You Bring One Home

Do your homework first

Before buying a Leopard gecko, understand:

1. Heating and temperature gradients
2. Feeding and supplementation
3. Humid hide function
4. Safe substrate choices
5. Basic health signs

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Set up the enclosure first

Before your gecko arrives, confirm:

1. **Warm Side:** stable and verified
2. Cool side temperature confirmed
3. Humid hide installed and functioning
4. Heating connected to thermostat
5. Thermometers and hygrometer installed

The enclosure should be working before the animal arrives.

Choosing and Buying

A healthy Leopard gecko should show:

1. Clear, open eyes
2. Straight limbs
3. Clean vent
4. Alert behavior
5. Full, rounded tail

Ask the seller:

1. What insects is it eating?
2. How often is it fed?
3. What supplements are used?
4. Has it had shedding or health issues?

If you own other reptiles:

Quarantine new animals for **30–60 days**.

Bringing Your New Animal Home

Acclimation

When your gecko arrives:

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1. Place directly into enclosure
2. Leave undisturbed for several days
3. Avoid handling for the first week
4. Offer food after settling

Stress is the most common cause of temporary feeding refusal.

Enclosures

Leopard geckos can be kept successfully in several enclosure styles. The correct choice depends on your home temperature, available space, and maintenance preferences.

Important rule: no routine cohabitation for pet owners

Pet Leopard geckos should be housed individually.

Breeders may occasionally pair or group animals under controlled conditions, but this is not recommended for typical pet ownership due to:

1. Stress
2. Feeding competition
3. Injury risk
4. Difficulty monitoring health

Individual housing is the safest standard for pet Leopard gecko care.

Glass Tank / Terrarium

Pros

1. Easy to find
2. Good visibility
3. Works well with overhead heat

Cons

1. Loses heat quickly
2. Screen tops reduce temperature stability

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PVC Enclosure

Pros

1. Excellent heat retention
2. Stable temperatures
3. Durable

Cons

1. Higher upfront cost

Tub Setup

Pros

1. Affordable
2. Easy to clean
3. Holds belly heat well

Cons

1. Limited visibility
2. Depends heavily on room temperature

A tub setup generally works best when room temperature stays **around 75°F or warmer**.

Rack System

Most commonly used by breeders or keepers with multiple animals.

Pros

1. Space efficient
2. Easy maintenance

Cons

1. Not display-friendly
2. Dependent on room temperature

Closed racks hold heat better than open racks but still require temperature verification.

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Bioactive / Planted Vivarium

Pros

1. Naturalistic appearance
2. Enrichment potential

Cons

1. More complex maintenance
2. Requires careful planning

Bioactive is optional, not required.

Enclosure Size Guide

Hatchlings

5–10 gallon equivalent

Juveniles

10–15 gallon equivalent

Adults

Minimum:

20 gallon

Preferred:

30–40 gallon footprint

Tub sizes

Babies:

Shoebox size

Adults:

28 quart or larger

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Temperature and Heating

Proper temperature is the most important factor in Leopard gecko care.

Warm Side: 87–90°F

Maximum: 94°F

Cool Side: Mid to upper 70s°F

Practical heating rule

If your house is 75°F or warmer — belly heat often works. If your house is 75°F or cooler — overhead heat is usually needed.

Belly heat warms surfaces, not air.

Room temperature determines enclosure performance.

Use digital thermometers to verify both warm and cool sides.

Heating Equipment and Safety

Common heat sources:

1. Under-tank heat mat
2. Heat tape
3. Halogen bulb
4. Ceramic heat emitter

Thermostat requirement

All belly heat must be controlled by a thermostat.

Never run heating equipment without one.

Unsafe heating equipment

Do not use heat rocks.

They frequently cause burns.

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Lighting

Lighting does not need to be complicated.

Many Leopard gecko setups operate successfully without UVB. Some keepers choose to provide low-output UVB for a more natural light cycle.

If using UVB:

Use low-output lighting designed for shade-dwelling reptiles.

A commonly recommended example is:

Arcadia ShadeDweller–type UVB lighting.

Practical lighting rules

1. Provide shaded areas
2. Follow manufacturer distance guidelines
3. Maintain normal day/night cycle

Supplement connection

If you use UVB:

Use plain calcium.

If you do not use UVB:

Use calcium with D3.

Lighting and supplementation must match.

Humidity

Humidity: 20–40%

Do not raise humidity across the entire enclosure.

Humidity belongs inside the humid hide.

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Moist Hide Requirement

Every Leopard gecko enclosure must include:

A humid hide.

This prevents shedding problems and supports hydration.

How to Make a Moist Hide

1. Use enclosed hide or container
2. Ensure smooth entrance
3. Add moisture-retaining material
4. Keep damp, not wet
5. Replace when dirty

Recommended materials

Best options:

1. Sphagnum moss
2. Coco fiber
3. Damp paper towel

Moss is widely preferred because it:

1. Holds moisture well
2. Resists mold
3. Reduces impaction risk

Substrate

Safe substrate options:

1. Paper towel
2. Newspaper
3. Shelf liner
4. Tile
5. Flat stone

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Warning: NO SAND

Sand increases impaction risk.

Paper towel is ideal for:

1. New arrivals
2. Sick animals
3. Quarantine
4. Babies

Water

Provide fresh water at all times.

Requirements:

1. Shallow dish
2. Clean daily
3. Stable placement

Check tail fullness regularly as an indicator of hydration and condition.

Enclosure Setup Essentials

Every enclosure should include:

1. Warm hide
2. Cool hide
3. Humid hide
4. Water dish
5. Safe substrate
6. Thermostat
7. Thermometer
8. Hygrometer

Secure hides reduce stress and improve feeding response.

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Feeding

Leopard geckos are insectivores.

Staple feeders

1. Mealworms
2. Crickets
3. Dubia roaches

Additional feeders

1. Superworms
2. Hornworms
3. Black soldier fly larvae
4. Waxworms (treat)

Feeding schedule

Juveniles:

Daily

Adults:

Every 2–3 days

Adjust feeding based on body condition.

Feeding tips

1. Use appropriately sized insects
2. Remove uneaten feeders
3. Rotate feeder types
4. Monitor appetite

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Supplementation

Feeder insects require supplementation.

Basic supplements:

1. Calcium
2. Multivitamin

General rule

No UVB:

Use calcium with D3

Using UVB:

Use plain calcium

Maintain consistent routine.

Body Condition and Weight Management

Healthy condition

1. Full tail
2. Smooth body
3. Normal movement

Underweight signs

1. Thin tail
2. Visible bones
3. Low energy

Overweight signs

1. Very thick tail
2. Fat deposits near legs
3.

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Reduced activity

Maintain moderate body condition.

Shedding

Shedding is normal.

Most Leopard geckos shed without assistance when humidity and husbandry are correct.

Stuck Shed

Common causes:

1. Dry humid hide
2. Low humidity access
3. Poor hydration

How to Handle Stuck Shed

1. Review enclosure setup
2. Refresh humid hide
3. Soak in shallow warm water if needed
4. Water should not cover the head
5. Use damp cotton swab gently

Do not force removal.

Handling

Leopard geckos generally tolerate handling well.

Avoid handling:

1. During shedding
2. After feeding
3. During initial acclimation

Handle calmly and briefly.

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Tail Warning

Never grab the tail.

Leopard geckos may drop their tail when stressed.

Common Health Concerns

Metabolic Bone Disease

Caused by:

1. Poor calcium intake
2. Incorrect supplementation

Impaction

Often caused by:

1. Unsafe substrate
2. Low temperatures

Dehydration

Signs include:

1. Wrinkled skin
2. Thin tail
3. Low activity

When to See a Reptile Vet

Seek veterinary care for:

1. Weight loss
2. Persistent refusal to eat
3. Injury
4. Swelling
5. Severe lethargy

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6. Repeated shedding problems
7. Abnormal stool

Choose a veterinarian experienced with reptiles.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Routine cleaning prevents most problems.

Spot Cleaning

Remove waste as needed.

Full Cleaning

Every:

1–4 weeks

Frequency depends on substrate and enclosure conditions.

Examples:

Paper towel:

Weekly

Solid substrates:

Less frequent but still routine

Cleaning Process

1. Remove gecko
2. Remove substrate
3. Wash enclosure
4. Disinfect surfaces
5. Rinse thoroughly
6. Dry completely
7. Replace substrate

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Common Mistakes and Warnings to Know

Most problems trace back to these:

1. No thermostat
2. Incorrect temperatures
3. Using sand
4. No humid hide
5. Overfeeding
6. Poor supplementation
7. Housing geckos together
8. Running belly heat in cold rooms

Stable temperatures prevent most health problems.

Quick Troubleshooting Guide

Gecko won't eat

Check:

1. Temperature
2. Stress
3. Shedding

Stuck shed

Check:

1. Humid hide
2. Moisture level

Lethargy

Check:

1. Temperature
2. Hydration

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3. Feeding

Supply Checklist

Basic setup includes:

1. Enclosure
2. Thermostat
3. Heating source
4. Thermometer
5. Hygrometer
6. Hides (3)
7. Water dish
8. Substrate
9. Feeding insects
10. Supplements

Recommended Resources

Purchase supplies from:

1. Reptile specialty stores
2. Trusted online retailers
3. Reputable breeders

Prioritize:

1. Thermostat
2. Thermometer
3. Safe heating equipment

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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Do Leopard geckos need UVB?

Optional. Many setups operate without it. If used, choose low-output lighting and adjust supplementation accordingly.

What temperature should they be kept at?

Warm side:

87–90°F

Cool side:

Mid to upper 70s°F

Can Leopard geckos live together?

Pet geckos should be housed individually.

How often should they eat?

Juveniles:

Daily

Adults:

Every 2–3 days

Can they live on belly heat only?

Yes, if room temperature stays around 75°F or warmer.

About the Author

This leopard gecko care guide was written and compiled by **Zac Parpart**, owner of **Parpart's Pristine Pythons** and **Reptile Ads**.

The information in this guide is based on real-world experience keeping and breeding leopard geckos, along with knowledge gathered from the wider reptile community over many years. While experienced keepers and breeders have contributed valuable insight and shared best practices, this guide represents the author's personal understanding of proper leopard gecko husbandry and was independently written and prepared for use as an educational resource for pet owners.

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Care practices may vary slightly between individual keepers, breeders, and regions. This guide reflects commonly accepted standards intended for responsible pet ownership and long-term animal welfare.

Final Thoughts

Leopard geckos do best when life is predictable. They do not need fancy equipment or complicated routines — they need steady temperatures, a working humid hide, clean water, and regular feeding. Most problems show up when something basic gets overlooked or changed too often. Pay attention to the small things, fix issues early, and keep the setup simple. If the environment stays stable, these animals are tough, reliable, and usually very easy to keep for many years.

Consistency is the key to long-term success.

Written and compiled by:

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Important

> **PLEASE READ**
> This guide is general husbandry information, not veterinary advice. It does not diagnose, and it does not replace an examination by a qualified exotics veterinarian. Local laws on keeping, transporting and selling this species vary and change — check what applies where you live before you buy.

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