

## Shopping List

Use this section to work out the costs for your new pet. Remember that you will require all the items listed as essentials, but those listed as optional can be added later.

### Essential

Vivarium / Aquarium / Fauna box	Size_____	Cost_____
If Aquarium a lid is needed	Size_____	Cost_____
Heating	Size _____	Cost _____
Thermostat	Type_____	Cost_____
Thermometer	Type_____	Cost_____
Water bowl	Size_____	Cost_____
Hide rock / Cork bark	Size_____	Cost_____
Substrates	Type_____	Cost_____
Livefood / dry food	Type_____	Cost_____
Vitamin supplements	Type_____	Cost_____
Disinfectants	Type_____	Cost_____
		<b>Total_____</b>

### Optional Extras

Fluorescent light	Size_____	Cost_____
Starter unit	Size_____	Cost_____
Light reflector	Size_____	Cost_____
Coloured light bulb & holder	Size_____	Cost_____
Artificial plants	Type_____	Cost_____
Vivarium decor	Type_____	Cost_____
Other items	Type_____	Cost_____
		<b>Total_____</b>

# FBH Guide to

# Leopard Geckos



**Leopard Geckos** *Eublepharis macularius* are terrestrial geckos that originate from the arid mountains regions of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. They grow to a maximum size of approximately 25cm.

These are ideal lizards for the first time keeper as they do not grow particularly large, are very hardy, easy to keep and very attractive. There is probably no better lizard to start with. Leopard geckos are ideal lizards for children and, although baby geckos are fragile, they soon grow and become accustomed to handling. They require little maintenance and the overall costs involved are low which also makes them highly recommended.

Leopard geckos have been bred in captivity for many years and are wonderful animals that will give you years of enjoyment. In captivity a leopard gecko can live beyond eight years. While it is true that leopard geckos are very easy to keep and require very little time to maintain, they are live animals and you must be prepared to give them the time and money they need to be looked after properly. Rough handling can occasionally cause a leopard gecko to shed its tail but this will re-grow in time.

**Size:**

As a hatchling leopard geckos measure 6-7cm and adults may grow up to 25cm.

#### **Housing:**

You may opt to start with one of the many small animal pens for a hatchling and then upgrade to a vivarium or aquarium when the animals grow larger. If using an aquarium a tight-fitting, ventilated, vivarium-lid will be needed to prevent escapees.

#### **Vivarium furnishings:**

When setting up your cage, remember that these geckos originate from very arid conditions so it is important to provide a suitable environment. Ideally, the substrate should be vivarium Calci-sand, but other alternatives are available. You can add larger stones to your sand to create a more realistic rocky, desert terrain. When you have your base material you can then add further furnishings to make the set-up more aesthetically pleasing.

No matter what your cage size, certain elements are essential. At least one hide at both the cool and warm end of the tank per animal must be included as, even if animals will share a hide (and most will), it is important that they have the option to have their own space if required (even leopard geckos suffer marital disputes!). If decorating vivaria or aquaria with rocks make sure they don't have sharp edges and ensure they cannot fall and crush your animals. Artificial plants and other vivarium decor will enhance the appearance of the set-up and are now widely available. The final set up for your leopard gecko is only limited by your imagination, so why not let it run wild and create a stunning naturalistic home which, not only will your pets enjoy, but will also provide hours of entertainment for the whole family.

#### **Heating:**

One of the best methods of heating is the heat mat. Choose an appropriate size to provide the right degree of heating and if in doubt then ask for assistance from the shop. Ensure that only about half of the floor area is covered by the mat. If you use a vivarium or aquarium you may again chose to use a heat mat, but could also consider other options such as a coloured light bulb, or indeed a combination of methods. Any heating device, or light bulb, should be controlled by an appropriate thermostat.

Leopard geckos need temperatures in the range of 20-28°C, but can take short term exposure to temperatures as high as 35°C and as low as 10°C, although these extremes should be avoided. It is very important to read the instructions for any heating device before installing it in your pet's home. Check regularly to ensure the heater is working properly, although modern heaters are very reliable. It is a good idea to have a thermometer in the cage so it is easy to monitor the temperature.

#### **Lighting:**

UVB lighting is not appropriate for leopard geckos and can lead to eye problems.

#### **Humidity:**

The most common problem with leopard geckos is skin shedding. Like all reptiles, leopard geckos shed the outside layer of skin regularly but, unlike snakes, the discarded skin is normally eaten and is rarely seen. On occasion, however, the skin can become stuck around their toes or eyes. If you see your gecko is having problems shedding give it a spray of tepid water, or place it in a separate box with some damp kitchen roll. If this does not work seek further advice from your pet shop, reptile society or breeder. A shedding box with damp moss or vermiculite should be provided and could also double up as an additional hide.

#### **Water:**

A small bowl of clean drinking water should be available at all times. The bowl should be shallow and spill-proof.

#### **Diet and Feeding**

Feeding leopard geckos is very easy. They will take a wide variety of insects, such as crickets, small locusts, wax worms and mealworms (only feed the latter in small quantities). Feed baby geckos a good meal every other day and adults once or twice a week. It is important not to over feed and to make sure that all the food has been eaten before you offer more. If you are unsure how much to feed ask advice from your pet supplier.

There are now also dry gecko diets available but, whilst these are excellent, don't use them exclusively and offer your animals a selection of live insects as well. It is very important to regularly use a vitamin supplement and follow the instructions on the container carefully. Most supplements can be dusted onto livefoods and will provide essential vitamins and minerals that will ensure your animals live and grow healthily.

#### **General:**

Caring for your geckos is very easy and takes little time. Each week you should thoroughly inspect the cage and remove any uneaten food, waste material and shed skin. In addition to this regular cleaning regime, you will need to completely dismantle and clean the cage once or twice a year. When cleaning your animals' enclosures always ensure you use a disinfectant specially manufactured for reptiles and never be tempted to use normal household disinfectants.

#### **Getting more information**

There are many excellent books on keeping leopard geckos available and you should purchase one or more of these and read it before you buy your pet. You could also consider joining your local reptile society who will be happy to provide help and advice. For further information check out the following:

**FBH web site: [www.f-b-h.co.uk](http://www.f-b-h.co.uk)**