



Jungle Fever Care Sheet

Fat Tailed Gecko

This care sheet has been developed by the proprietor through research and personal experience. It is intended to provide information on initial set up and the care that your pet will

require. For more in depth advice and information please do not hesitate to discuss your pet further with the staff of Jungle Fever or purchase a specific species book available at Jungle Fever.

Common Name: Fat Tailed Gecko (*Hemidactylus Caudicinctus*)

Native: West Africa

Size: Males are usually 9-10". Females 7-8"

Life Span: Average lifespan can be anything from 8-20 years; there are reports of them living to 25 years

Enclosures: Being nocturnal, they sleep through the day usually in moist burrows or rocky crevices, coming out at night to eat insects. Leopard geckos are terrestrial and do not have the sticky pads on their feet which a lot of geckos do have. Therefore floor space is more important than height when choosing a vivarium. Glass or plastic vivariums are suitable providing they have good ventilation.

Size: A vivarium of 36" x 18" x 18" is generally a good size for housing a pair of leopard gecko's.

UV Lighting: It has been shown that in the wild, nocturnal geckos are capable of synthesizing their vitamin D3 more efficiently than other geckos which are active during the day. Nocturnal gecko's can synthesize the required D3 by basking for a very short time at sunset/sunrise, when the sun is not so strong. Leopard geckos do not need artificial lighting or UV light, which some reptiles do require, but they do need to know weather it is day or night. Use of UV lighting is debatable for geckos we urge you read up on this subject and keep up to date.

As geckos are nocturnal you may wish to use a night light which they can't detect to observe their activities during the evening without disturbing them.

Heat: Geckos obtain their heat through their underside so the best source of heat is a heat mat placed under either the substrate or under the tank itself. The mat needs to cover between half or 1/3 of the bottom of the enclosure. The temperature of the floor of your enclosure should read between 84-88 degrees Fahrenheit. Add a heat bulb to raise the temperature of the enclosure to the desired temperature.

Humidity: You can mist the cage several times a week, daily for juveniles, to achieve proper humidity. Another option is to put a humid hide within the enclosure and not misting at all. The advantage of this is that misting may get the faeces wet and could create an environment that is very unhealthy for your gecko, if the correct amount of humidity is not offered, the gecko may have difficulty with shedding or become dehydrated, so make sure that your humidity hides stay moist at all times. Hides can be lined with sphagnum moss.

Thermometer: Thermometers are crucial to achieving and maintaining the correct temperature throughout the enclosure.

Substrate: Many substrates including sand should be avoided as there is a high risk of ingestion and impaction. Suitable substrates include kitchen towel and newspaper.

Cage Furnishings: Provide your gecko with hides for sleeping in through the day – make one a moist hide to aid shedding, by adding moist moss, coco fiber or peat, and spraying it daily to maintain the humidity.

Always make sure the furnishings are secure and won't topple over to hurt or kill your animal. Large rocks need to be secured so the lizard cannot burrow underneath and accidentally crush itself to death.

Sanitary Measures: Sanitary measures are important for your pet's health and well being. Faecal matter will need to be cleared on a daily basis and clean substrate added as required. Clean the tanks weekly with an appropriate cage cleaner made safe for reptile use.

Clean furnishings weekly by soaking in hot water and rinsing thoroughly before placing back into the enclosure.

Sanitary measures are also important for your health. Always wash your hands with a good antibacterial soap after you have finished cleaning and always wash your hands between enclosures of other animals.

Diet: Fat tailed geckos eat a variety of foods including mealworms, crickets, locusts and earthworms. These items will require gut loading and dusting with supplements. You should not feed wax worms as a staple diet as they have a high fat content and can prove addictive. Feeding them one or two per week as a treat is sufficient. Geckos prefer to hunt their

prey at night, so it is advised to place food items with your geckos after dusk. Ensure your insects are gut loaded prior at least 24 hours prior to feeding your animal.

Water can be provided in a shallow water bowl and a daily misting, but do not over do this as they do originate from dry climates.

Supplements: As well as adding a calcium dish to the enclosure, use calcium balancer and multi vitamin for reptiles to help aid bone growth. Geckos cannot overdose on calcium but they can on vitamins.

Water: Water can be provided in a shallow water bowl and a daily misting, but do not over do this as they originate from dry climates. Fresh clean water should be available at all times. We see some of our gecko's drinking regularly from our water dishes. Some geckos have been known to use their water dish as a toilet, if this is so it will need cleaning as soon as possible. If the gecko continues to spoil the water then you will have to remove the dish and only place it back in the vivarium until the gecko has drunk its fill. Then remove the dish once more. If you keep doing this for a few days, then the gecko should pick up a new location as a toilet.

Health: Never house two male geckos together once they are sexually mature, they are territorial and will fight for dominance, sometimes to the death! Fat tail geckos being quite hardy and very tolerant with their environmental requirements makes it unlikely that you will have any health related problems with them at all. They will not often suffer from the diseases and ailments list below; they are included here only to make you aware of some of the medical problems that can occur in rare situations.

Metabolic Bone Disease (Hypocalcaemia) is caused when the diet does not contain enough calcium. In order for the gecko to attain higher levels of usable calcium the gecko's body then begins to extract calcium from its own bones. Symptoms associated with this include lethargy, painful swollen joints, and unusual curvature of the legs, soft jaws and overall weakness in the animal. With leopard geckos being somewhat more resistant to complications regarding low calcium levels and this being one of the most easily preventable diseases that can occur you should almost never see this problem. To prevent MBD all you need to be aware of is that you need to add calcium supplements to the live food you are providing to your geckos.

Tail Loss: Geckos will drop their tails if they are threatened or grabbed by the tail. Cage mates have been known to accidentally grab the tail of another, which has caused the tail to drop. If this happens you should remove the gecko as soon as possible, keep them warm, fed and watered regularly as they use their tails as a fat reserve and are more vulnerable

to stress at this time. The tail will grow back but it will not look the same as the old one. It will be shorter and fatter than the original.

Respiratory Infections: Respiratory infections can be caused by prolonged exposure to temperatures less than 73 degrees Fahrenheit or humidity levels that are too high. Low temperature causes a suppressed immune system, which allows respiratory infection to take hold. Symptoms are usually not easy to identify and may just be signs that your gecko is in a distressed state and seems to be panting and leaving the mouth slightly open most of the time. Mild cases can easily be cured by making the temperature in the enclosure slightly higher, a day time temperature of around 84-90 degrees Fahrenheit with a night time temp drop no less than 80 degrees Fahrenheit. If symptoms persist it is recommended that you seek expert advice from your local veterinary surgeon.