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NAME

Leopard gecko *Eublepharus macularis*

FAMILY

Gekkonidae

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Middle East and Asia

IDENTIFICATION

Typical "Fat-tailed" gecko - yellow or whitish with dark blotches or spots. The dorsal surface is covered with small, evenly marked tubercles.

RELATED SPECIES

Other Eublepharines seen include the Fat-tailed gecko *Hemitheconyx caudicinctus* from Africa, and the desert dwelling *Coleonyx* species from the USA such as the Banded gecko (*C. variegatus*) and the Texas Banded gecko (*C. brevis*).

COMMON MUTATIONS

A large range of colour mutations or morphs are available, including Blazing Blizzard, Hypo, Carrot-tail, and Jungle. A genetically large morph known as Genetic Giant is also becoming more common and is being bred into the various colour morphs.

SIZE

<25cm

TEMPERAMENT

Good – generally readily handled. Males can be territorial and aggressive to each other. Beware autotomy if the gecko is unwell or severely stressed/frightened.

SEX DIFFERENCES

Males have pronounced preanal pores. Hemipenes obvious in adult males.



HUSBANDRY REQUIREMENTS

Can be kept individually or in small groups of one male with two or three females. Dry vivarium with sand substrate plus rocks. Heliotherm so needs hot spot with temperatures up to 30 °C. Temperature range 24-30 °C, allowed to fall at night to around 20 °C. Full spectrum lighting is not required with dietary vitamin D₃ supplementation, although leopard geckos can definitely benefit from a 2% ultraviolet source.

FEEDING

Insects including mealworms, crickets, small locusts and waxworms. Always use a calcium/D₃ supplement (dusted on to food and gut-loaded into prey).

REPRODUCTION

Sexually mature at two to three years old. Stimulate reproduction by reducing photoperiod and dropping temperature to 21 °C for about six weeks. Around six weeks after mating the female lays eggs in clutches of two at roughly monthly intervals, with as many as six to eight pairs of eggs being laid in one season. Provide the female with somewhere secluded to lay her eggs - old margarine tubs with entrance holes cut in them are often used, with slightly damp sand or vermiculite. Incubate the eggs at a humidity of around 80-95%, and hatching occurs 55-60 days at 26-33 °C. This species exhibits temperature dependant sex determination. Eggs incubated at 27-29 °C are mostly female; whilst at 32-33 °C they are mostly male. Hatchlings emerge within two to four hours, and the eggs in a clutch usually hatch within 30-36 hours of each other. Hatchlings are banded.

COMMON PROBLEMS

Metabolic bone disease, cryptosporidium, gut impactions and autotomy are common problems.

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