

CRESTED GECKO CARE

The Crested gecko originates from the islands of New Caledonia where the species was believed to be extinct until 1994 when it was subsequently rediscovered. In its natural environment, it lives a mainly solitary lifestyle and can be found resting in rainforests, sleeping in trunk hollows or leaf litter, and only becomes active at night. Similar to other geckos, it can shed its tail as a defence mechanism (autotomy), but unlike others it lacks an ability to regenerate the tail, so care should be taken while handling. Geckos may live 15-20 years if looked after correctly.

HOUSING

- As large a vivarium as possible should be provided to enable room for exercise, to climb and to allow a thermal gradient to be created within the tank (hot to cold). Glass vivariums with mesh tops are typically used with these species to prevent wood damage. We recommend a minimum vivarium size of 45x45x60cm.
- Good ventilation is required and additional ventilation holes may need to be created.
- Hides are required to provide some security. Artificial plants, cardboard boxes, plant pots, logs or commercially available hides can be used. They should be placed both at the warm and cooler ends of the tank. One hide should contain damp moss or kitchen towel to provide a humid environment for shedding.
- There are a number of commercially available substrates available for lizards including many soil / sand mixes. Care should be taken not to feed your lizard directly on the substrate to avoid accidental ingestion and blockages (especially with wood chip or sand based substrates). Newspaper or paper towels are easy to maintain and can work well in the short-term. However, they do not allow for natural behaviours so for longer term housing, it is worth considering more natural substrate types.
- The vivarium should be spot cleaned as soon as any waste appears to help prevent disease and fully cleaned once a month with a reptile safe disinfectant.



TEMPERATURES AND HUMIDITY

- Reptiles depend on external heat sources to regulate their body temperature, so supplementary heating is required to create a temperature range (**see separate guide on heating for reptiles**).
- Typically a basking area is created using a light emitting spot bulb, providing a basking temperature of ~28°C. This should be kept on for a minimum of 12 hours a day and switched off at night.
- Heat sources must be attached to a thermostat and measured with a digital maximum/minimum thermometer to ensure the tank does not overheat. The cool end should be maintained at ~25°C.
- Background heat can be provided with a heat mat (on the back wall) a tubular heater, a heat plate or a ceramic bulb. This should be set on a thermostat so that the overnight temperature does not drop below ~20°C.
- Heat sources should be guarded to prevent thermal burns.
- Humidity should be checked with a hygrometer and kept between 50-70%, this can be achieved by spraying at regular intervals or by using a suitable substrate which maintains moisture.

LIGHTING

- Despite being crepuscular species (active at dawn and dusk), crested geckos appear to benefit from UV-b light.
- Various UV lamps are available (**see separate handout on lighting for reptiles**), but for crested geckos a lamp with a low output (e.g. 6%) should be used to mimic the low level sunlight they would be exposed to in their wild environment.
- Lamps should be kept on for ~ 12 hours per day and at an appropriate distance from the lizard as recommended by the manufacturer.
- All lamps should be changed at least as frequently as manufacturer's instructions or checked regularly for their UV output.

WHAT TO FEED

- Crested geckos are omnivores and in the wild will eat a variety of plant matter, invertebrates and even other small lizards.
- Typically crested geckos are fed a complete formulated diet. Alternatively, a mix of fruit items and dark leafy salad vegetables may be offered daily and invertebrate prey such as house crickets, black crickets, dubia roaches and locusts offered once or twice per week. Mealworms should only be given in moderation while waxworms and morio worms should only be given as occasional treats due to their high fat content.
- Live food should be gut loaded before feeding to your lizard, ideally with a complete invertebrate diet. Live food should also be dusted with both vitamin and mineral supplementation regularly. We recommend alternating dusting with a calcium supplement (e.g. Calcidust) and a combined vitamin/mineral supplement (e.g. Nutrobal). Live food should be fed immediately after dusting and removed from the enclosure if not eaten within 30 minutes.
- Water should always be available and a container is required which will allow the lizard to submerge completely. This should be changed daily. Regular bathing may also be enjoyed but is not necessary.

SALMONELLA

- All reptiles can potentially carry Salmonella.
- However it is rarely a cause of illness in reptiles and treatment is not required.
- It can be transmitted to people (especially young children or those who are immuno-compromised) so good hygiene after handling the reptile is important. Generally washing your hands in soap is sufficient. There are commercially available disinfectants that can be used as an alternative.

ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS

We recommend annual health checks every year for pet reptiles as medical problems are more easily treated if detected at an early stage – **you can register for automatic reminders to be sent to you from the clinic for convenience**

INSURANCE

We highly recommend that you take out a pet insurance policy. For a monthly fee your pet can receive the best treatment at an affordable cost. There is normally an excess to pay for each condition then after that costs are covered up to a set limit. Once you have the policy, please provide us with a copy of your insurance details. There are a lot of different companies and policies available and we suggest you contact a number of them for information- we have a leaflet advising what to look out for. Our advice is to choose a policy which provides cover for chronic illness for the life of your pet. If this policy is too much for you then the best cover you can afford will provide piece of mind in an accident or emergency.