

Geckos

(WA Species)



With 8 species available to keepers, there is a gecko to suit everyone! Do you enjoy watching your lizards scaling vertical glass? Or perhaps you want an expert burrower who can dig their own way? Geckos are big bundles of cute in a small package, and many keepers find joy in watching these little legends go about their daily business. So, why not consider a gecko as the next addition to your family?

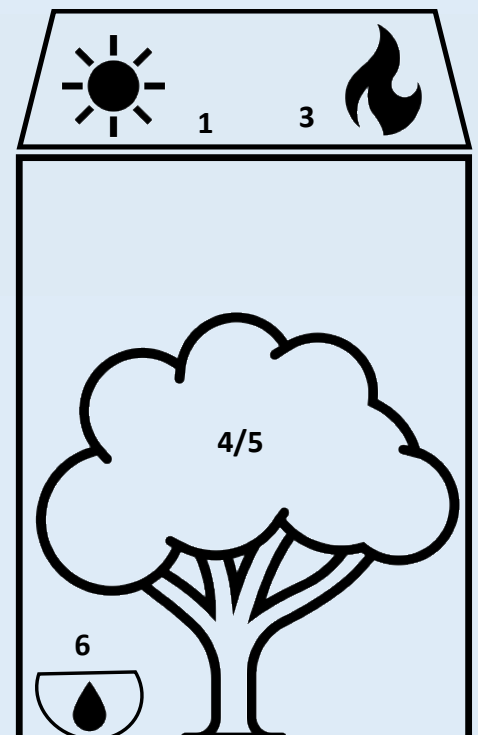
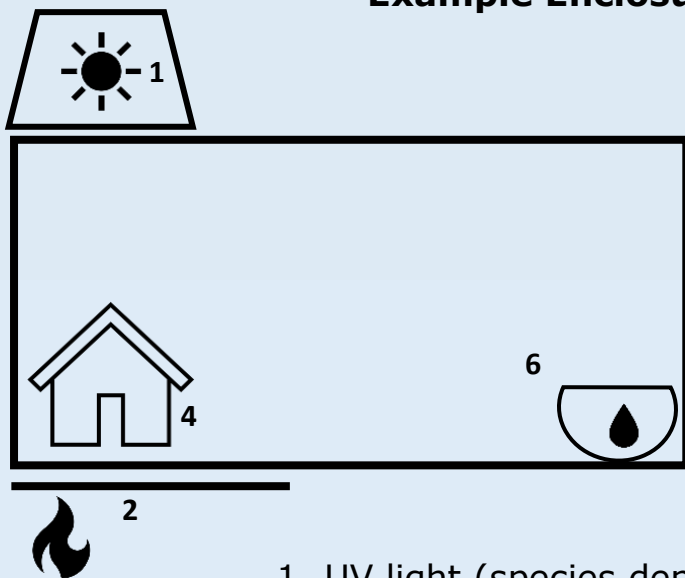
Housing

Enclosure Size: Enclosure size will depend on the species and number of geckos you intend to house. It is important that geckos are at a similar size and males should not be housed together. A single gecko should have enough room to climb, burrow or hide and maintain a solid thermal gradient (cool end, warm end). Some geckos are great climbers but will also spend time on the ground, while others are terrestrial and/or burrowers and will only climb occasionally. A suitable enclosure size for 1-3 arboreal geckos would be 45cmHx45cmWx30cmD, or 30cmHx45cmWx45cmD for terrestrial geckos. Be prepared to potentially not see your geckos often if you choose to keep a nocturnal species.

Enclosure materials should also be considered as they offer different traits.

- Glass: waterproof, good for climbing but offers no insulation against heat loss.
- MDF: keeps heat well but is not watertight and geckos cannot climb it.
- Custom enclosures: can be tailored to your needs but can be expensive.

Example Enclosure Setup



1. UV light (species dependant)
2. Heat mat/cords
3. Heat light
4. Hides (multiple)
5. Climbing branches/logs
6. Water bowl

Temperature: Geckos can have quite different heating needs so it's important to do some research on your chosen species. Most geckos can tolerate an overnight temperature of 8-16°C, so night-time heating is not essential unless your home drops considerably in temperature (below 8°C could be life threatening to some species). Enclosures need to have both a "hot spot" (warm end) and a "cool spot" (cool end) allowing for a thermal gradient for your gecko to move between. Hot spots will be anywhere between 26-35°C, with cool end temperatures down to 15-24°C.

Lighting/Heating: Your enclosure shape will determine which style of heating is used; tall enclosures can use a traditional heat lamp, whereas low enclosures can utilise heat from above or below. Not every species will require UV lighting as most geckos are nocturnal creatures, hiding away during the day. There are many heating/lighting elements to choose from:

- Heat cords or a heat mat
- Heat reflector globes
- Infrared heat globes
- UV globes (species specific)
- LED display lights (no heat given off)

The wattage of your lights/heating will depend on the size of your enclosure and should be controlled with a thermometer/thermostat to ensure the correct temperatures are being maintained. Heating elements should not be inside your gecko's enclosure as they may burn themselves on exposed lights/cords.

Substrate: There are several great substrates that can be used for geckos! The depth of your substrate will vary depending on your chosen species.

- Reptile safe sands: good for burrowing species but can be ingested.
- Coco peat: holds humidity well but can get mouldy if not properly changed.
- Leaf litter: great for burrowing/hiding but doesn't hold humidity well.
- Fake grass: cheap & easy to clean but not suitable for burrowing geckos.
- Burrowing clay: great for burrowing species but expensive.

Accessories: Keeping your gecko's enclosure simple to begin with is recommended while you get used to each other. A simple beginner enclosure will include:

- A water bowl.
- Branches/logs/rocks to climb and bask on.
- Fake plants/logs/rock caves to hide in.
- Pre-dug burrow

Handling

Geckos are not a species that need to be handled unless necessary; this is due to their delicate nature and some species ability to detach their tails if they feel under threat. Be prepared, as some species can shoot a sticky substance up to 30cm away using glands on their tails!

They can run quite fast, so take care if handling as a fall from a height could cause injury. If you must handle your gecko, gently scoop, and support them from below – most can fit in the palm of your hand. You can also apply slight pressure on their backs using your thumb to restrain them. Pets such as dogs and cats should be kept out of the room while you are handling your reptile, and supervision is always recommended for young children.

Feeding

Food: Geckos are insectivores; they will eat a variety of different insects. Some may prefer their insects to be alive and moving, while others will happily eat from tongs. It is not recommended to leave live insects in enclosures as they may bite or feed on your geckos while they sleep and/or can create an unhygienic environment. Mealworm and cricket feeders are great tools to safely live feed. Feeding routine will differ, but generally juveniles can be fed daily, and adults 1-3 times a week. Larger species (i.e., Marbled Velvet) are prone to obesity in captivity so feeding should be closely monitored.

Water: Every species of gecko will need misting to maintain humidity for drinking, shedding, and laying eggs (if applicable). Misting can happen anywhere from 3-4 times a week in summer, down to 1-2 times in winter, but it is recommended that one corner of the enclosure stays partially damp 24/7. A water bowl should always be available with fresh, clean water. You may need to place a rock in your bowl to eliminate the risk of drowning.

Supplements: All geckos will need their food dusted with a calcium supplement (we recommend Arcadia CalciumPro) once a week to maintain healthy bones. This will help eliminate the risk of your pet developing MBD as they grow.

Troubleshooting

My gecko isn't eating!

Your new gecko/s may need a few days to settle into their new environment – this can be a stressful time for them (and you). A few contributing factors could include:

- Temperature – is your enclosure at the correct heat for the species?
- Excess and/or stressful handling sessions
- Food – a lot of geckos prefer their bugs alive and moving.
- Where enclosure is located in the home – near drafts, direct sunlight etc.
- Shedding cycle

My gecko didn't slough (shed) properly!

A juvenile gecko should be shedding regularly as they grow and gain weight fast, and a healthy adult may only shed a few times a year. Geckos do not tend to shed in one solid piece; rather in delicate, smaller pieces that fall off while your pet runs around in its enclosure. Ensure that your husbandry is correct (heating, humidity, access to water etc.) as this can all affect your gecko's ability to shed correctly. Regular misting will help keep humidity levels up and allow for an easier shedding experience. If all other attempts have not worked, seek professional advice. Do not attempt to remove large pieces of skin yourself as this can cause damage to scales

and lead to further issues.

It's winter and my gecko is acting different!

Most geckos are quite hardy, and often have lower heat requirements than other reptiles; especially southern species (South-western Spiny Tail, for example). However, you may find your new gecko in a state of torpor during the cooler months. This will involve a period of food refusal and/or your gecko hiding away more frequently. Keep an eye on your thermometer temperatures during the cooler months, especially at night. Food can still be offered to your pet as this is not a prolonged state and will last from a few hours up to a few weeks depending on conditions.

Bites!

Your new gecko may try to bite you if you attempt to handle them; know that as a juvenile this is not likely to hurt and is expected to happen at least once or twice during the life of your pet, however some adults of larger species will have sharp teeth and can "latch on" after biting. Keep handling to a minimum to reduce the likelihood of bites occurring.

I've lost my gecko!

Always check your enclosure is closed correctly. Geckos can move quite fast, so try to locate them as soon as possible. If you do lose your new pet, there are steps you can take:

- If possible, restrict gecko to the room it was lost in (i.e., if lost in the loungeroom, close all windows, seal doors by wedging a towel underneath, close vents etc.)
- If arboreal, look in high places. If terrestrial, look for somewhere they can hide under (curtains, couch etc.)
- Look in places that emit heat like fridges, dishwashers, behind TVs, windowsills.
- If the animal cannot be located, contact the DBCA (Department of Biodiversity & Attractions) as soon as possible and follow their instructions.

Book a One-on-One Session

With over 40 years combined experience in the herpetology industry, the Discover Deadly team share a range on expertise. Consultant sessions are available for general advice or more specific issues. Bookings can be made online for \$30 up to 15 minutes.

Resources

Your first point of contact for advice/enquiries should always be your original breeder however, there are several professional businesses that can be reached out to.

- Unusual Pet Vets (Murdoch) 08 6117 7440

- Unusual Pet Vets (Osbourne Park) 08 6117 7450
- Busselton Vet Hospital 08 9752 1433
- Discover Deadly 08 9755 1771
- Southwest Pets (Bunbury) 08 9721 6217
- DBCA 08 9442 0300

Further Reading:

- "Keeping Geckos" by Rob Porter
- "A Guide to Australian Geckos in Captivity" by Dr Danny Brown

This care sheet© has been produced as a general guide for Western Australian reptile keepers. It should not replace the advice of a veterinarian.

Discover Deadly takes no responsibility in the misuse of the information provided.

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