

GUIDE TO CARING FOR CRESTED GECKOS

SHOPPING LIST

- Vivarium
- Substrate
- Heat mat/hot rock/spotlight
- Artificial vines and leaves
- UV light (optional)
- Thermometers x 2
- Hydrometer
- Thermostat
- Small water bowl
- Food bowl
- Live foods
- Calcium supplement
- Vitamin supplement
- Cage furnishings
- Pet safe disinfectant
- Book on crested geckos



The Animal Welfare Act 2006 means all pet owners have a legal duty of care to their pets. Anyone who is cruel to an animal or is found not to be providing the five animal welfare needs, as listed below, can be fined and sent to prison.

The Five Animal Welfare needs:

1. **Environment:** Pets should be given the correct housing according to its size, this includes shelter, space to exercise and a secure, comfortable place to rest.
2. **Diet:** Pets should be offered the correct type and volume of food to cover all their nutritional needs alongside access to clean, fresh water.
3. **Behaviour:** All pets should be allowed to exhibit normal behaviour patterns and should be provided with the facilities to do so.
4. **Company:** Some animals require the company of their own kind, whilst others should be kept on their own.
5. **Health:** All animals should be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease, and given veterinary treatment if they become sick or injured.



Remember – you should never release your pet into the wild.

This leaflet is produced by The Pet Charity, a national charity which promotes the joy and benefits of pet ownership.

Copyright © 2014 The Pet Charity. All Rights Reserved.

The Pet Charity www.thepetcharity.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1052488

To show your support for The Pet Charity please text TPTC30 and the amount in pounds you wish to donate to 70070.



This information is supported by the Reptile & Exotic Pet Trade Association

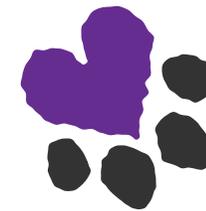


The British Veterinary Zoological Society supports the aims of The Pet Charity to secure and enhance the welfare of pet animals. For more information visit www.bvzs.org



This leaflet is supported by the

PIF
PET INDUSTRY FEDERATION



Crested geckos are usually very docile and make good pets if the correct care and accommodation is provided. The average life span is approximately 15 years and adults can reach sizes of 25cm.



THE PET CHARITY GUIDE TO CARING FOR CRESTED GECKOS

The crested gecko (*Rhacodactylus ciliatus*) is one of the most popular species of reptile kept in captivity and is available in a multitude of colours such as grey, brown, orange, yellow and red. In the wild, this species inhabits the forests of South Province, New Caledonia.

Crested geckos are not social animals, so they are best kept singularly.

GENERAL CARE

A healthy crested gecko should be bright, alert and active with its body and leg muscles appearing well-formed and strong. There should be no signs of loose skin or diarrhoea. The eyes, mouth and nostrils should be free of discharge and the body held off the ground when walking.

- **Diarrhoea:** This can be caused by many problems including incorrect feeding or internal parasites.
- **Mouth rot:** Cheesy deposits appear in the mouth.
- **Respiratory problems:** Signs include fluid or mucus from the nose.
- **Metabolic bone diseases:** Signs include deformed, swollen or paralysed hind limbs. This is due to a lack of calcium, vitamin D₃ and/or lack of exposure to UVB/UVA light. It can be reversed if caught in time and properly treated.

If you are at all worried about the health of your crested gecko you should consult your vet as soon as possible. It is recommended to seek a vet that has experience with reptiles.

Your pet should also be insured against unexpected veterinary costs.

HOUSING

A well ventilated, adequately heated, escape-proof vivarium is the best housing for crested geckos. The depth needs to be sufficient to provide a depth of substrate, and the minimum size should be around 60x30cm for a single animal. Crested geckos enjoy climbing, so it is advised that their habitat is taller than it is wide to allow for this.

TEMPERATURE

All reptiles are cold blooded and need an external heat source to maintain their body temperature. Each species of lizard requires different degrees of heating. One end of the vivarium should be heated to create a thermal gradient, allowing the pet to choose its preferred temperature. The ideal thermal gradient is 21-23°C at the cool end and 25-28°C at the hot end. Night temperature can be dropped by several degrees at both ends, which will benefit your pet as this reflects his natural environment.

Background heat can be provided by using heat mats, your pet shop can advise on heating products that are suitable for your particular set-up.

DID YOU KNOW?

Crested geckos are almost exclusively nocturnal in nature, although they may on occasion bask at the mouth of their burrows for short periods, usually in the morning and early evening.

Thermometers should be placed at each end to monitor the temperature range and the maximum temperature of the heat gradient can be controlled by a thermostat. You should fit wire mesh guards over exposed heat sources to prevent thermal burns.

LIGHTING

Crested geckos are nocturnal lizards and UVB lighting is not essential if they are kept on a balanced diet with an adequate source of dietary calcium and vitamin D₃. However, they will benefit from the provision of a normal UV pattern to recreate their natural conditions.

HUMIDITY

Humidity is very important to your crested gecko. A hygrometer will help you maintain an ideal humidity of between 60-80%. Spray the cage with water in the evening.



FURNISHINGS

The floor of the cage should be covered with a suitable substrate, such as coco fibre, which your pet shop can advise on.

Crested geckos enjoy climbing and spend the majority of their time off the ground, so piles of rocks, artificial leafy branches, securely positioned slates and other such furnishings will be appreciated by your pet.

CLEANING

Remove droppings and any uneaten food daily. Water bowls should be washed, dried and refilled regularly. Vivariums should be completely cleaned out and disinfected with a pet safe disinfectant on a regular basis. Soiled substrate should be disposed of and replaced daily through a spot-cleaning regime.

FOOD AND WATER

In the wild, crested geckos mostly eat old fruit that has dropped from branches. Commercial dry food is available from many pet shops, which can be mixed with water or fruit puree. Insects such as crickets, waxworm larvae, mealworms and appropriately sized locust hoppers can be offered as a treat every few days.

When feeding live food, it is important to feed the live food a nutritious diet and water to ensure your pet is also receiving a balanced diet. This is known as 'gut-loading' the live food.

Feeding should ideally take place daily, but in limited quantities that are eaten within an hour or two. Waxworm larvae and mealworms should be fed relatively sparingly as they have a high fat content. Remove any uneaten live food after around 30 minutes as they annoy crested geckos by nipping at them during the night.

It is very important that live food should be fed and watered as well as dusted with a vitamin and calcium supplement on a regular basis; once or twice a week for non-breeding adults and 3-4 times a week for juveniles and egg-laying females. Failure to undertake such dietary supplementation is highly likely to result in metabolic bone diseases and other such problems.

HANDLING

Crested geckos are usually very docile and rarely bite. Movements should be slow and gentle but confident. To pick up your gecko, place one hand above the shoulders and support the underside with your other hand.

Reptiles can carry a form of Salmonella, which can be transferred to humans. Good hygiene and washing your hands after handling your bearded dragon should be sufficient to prevent any risk of infection.