

Caring for your crested gecko

**How to keep pet crested
geckos healthy and happy**



Notcutts

GARDEN INSPIRATION SINCE 1897

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Are crested geckos right for me?

Crested geckos are very rewarding pets and make an ideal first pet reptile. If you take good care of him he can live for up to 14 years.

These geckos are more suited to older children and adults because they are delicate and handling of them must be gentle. Once your crested gecko is used to you, he can enjoy being handled.

Crested geckos come in many colour forms and will grow up to 20cm long. These geckos are nocturnal, which means that they are active during the night, or when their vivarium lights are switched off.

They can get quite noisy with small chirps, squeaks and squawks heard at night so we advise against keeping a crested gecko in a bedroom, unless you are a very heavy sleeper or work night shifts.

Crested geckos come from New Caledonia, a group of islands northeast of Australia. They have microscopic hairs that enable them to climb vertically or upside down which makes them very entertaining indeed.

Choosing a new pet crested gecko

When selecting your crested gecko, check these signs that he is healthy:

- Active and interested in you
- Bright, clear eyes
- Strong, sturdy tail
- Good appetite, eating regularly
- Stiff droppings
- Healthy skin
- Clear nose and vent

The first few days

We advise buying and setting up your vivarium for at least a week before bringing your new crested gecko home. This gives you time to get used to setting the temperature just right, creating the ideal environment for him to settle in.

When you bring him home, carefully place your gecko in the vivarium. Leave him, with some water, for 48 hours to settle into his new home. He needs time to get used to his new surroundings and will require as little stress as possible.

We recommend that you keep handling to a minimum during the first week until he is more comfortable in his new home and is feeding regularly.

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Creating a happy home

Many of the popular glass tanks and vivarium are perfect for crested geckos.

Make them feel at home by replicating a tiny piece of tropical rainforest in their tank with hidey holes in the form of logs, plants or even piping. Crested geckos will appreciate lots of climbing space and a daily misting ensures their humidity needs are met (between 60% and 80%).

The size of an enclosure for an adult pair of crested geckos needs to be at least 45cm x 45cm x 60cm. Height is more important than length as these are tree dwelling animals that love to climb. Younger lizards or geckos kept on their own can have a slightly smaller home.

Your gecko will need a shallow water dish and this needs to be changed daily to prevent bacterial build-up. This is particularly important because in a warm and moist habitat, bacteria and fungi can quickly develop. As well as having access to clean fresh water every day, you will need to spray them with water.

Heating and lighting

All reptiles are cold blooded and therefore rely on an external heat source to maintain their body temperature.

Crested geckos need a range of temperatures in their vivarium. Heat should be at one end of the vivarium allowing your gecko to warm up while the other end should stay cool. When using taller gecko terrariums the top of the tank will be the

warmer point and the bottom/floor will be cooler as this mimics what it would naturally be in a rainforest.

You will need a thermometer at each end of the vivarium to monitor this range. The cooler end should be a temperature of 21°C and 25°C at the heated end in the day going down to between 20°C and 22°C at night. This should be controlled with a good quality thermostat that is designed to be used with a heat mat. The heat mat should be fixed to the outside of the vertical wall of the vivarium.

Crested geckos are nocturnal but are active in low light around sunrise and sunset, so they require low level UVB lighting. This lighting can be provided using fluorescent tubes which should be replaced every 6 months.

Decoration

The tropical rainforest you recreate in your vivarium can be as varied as your imagination, with plenty of cover, many hiding places, plastic plants of varying heights, shapes etc. You could include a stand out feature such as an attractive climbing log or grape vine.

Cleaning

Careful attention should be paid to cleaning. Uneaten food, droppings and dead crickets should all be removed daily. This will prevent the growth of mould and fungi and the spread of bacteria. It is best to use a reptile safe disinfectant to keep their home clean. The entire enclosure should be cleaned and disinfected regularly with all the bedding

and twigs removed. Branches and other foliage will also need regular cleaning.

Kitchen sinks should not be used for bathing reptiles or cleaning reptile's dishes or vivariums. If bathtubs are used for these activities, they should be cleaned thoroughly with disinfectant.

A healthy diet and treats

Crested geckos need to be fed on a staple diet of suitably sized crickets or locusts, dusted with a calcium supplement.

Treat them now and then with a little mashed banana, peach and pear which will also need a vitamin or mineral supplement.

You can add a specific powder diet with water for extra nutrition. Wet foods should be changed daily to prevent illness and live foods offered alternately to fruit diets.

Getting to know you

Crested geckos will tolerate gentle handling but this does not mean they will definitely like it.

Initially they may squirm and defecate on you or squeak to let you know they are alarmed, so handle little and often and always with care, until they are used to you.

It is important to remember that geckos will jump so you must make sure that you handle them carefully.

Crested geckos also can drop their tails when they feel threatened (they can detach it as a distraction for potential predators). Unlike other geckos however, the crested will not re-grow its tail. If you are careful and don't force handling, this situation can be avoided.

Always wash your hands before and after handling your gecko.

Crested geckos and other pets

Provided you give your crested geckos enough space, they are very compatible. We advise keeping only one male in any group. One male will happily live with 2 females and females without a male will be fine.

Crested gecko skin shedding

As with all reptiles, crested geckos will occasionally shed their skin. It is not unusual for them to eat this to regain the nutrition from it.

To help them shed their skin they will need a humid, hidden area (containing damp moss) and a gentle misting with spray once a day.



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Potential health issues with crested geckos

FTS (Floppy Tail Syndrome)

This is a condition of the tail that is poorly understood. It is most likely due to calcium deficiency early on in life, or a lack of proper climbing and sheltering branches in the vivarium. If you suspect floppy tail syndrome, seek veterinary advice as soon as possible to rule out possible causes due to poor care.

Respiratory problems

Respiratory infections can happen if the geckos are kept in the wrong conditions or in unclean surroundings. Symptoms include gaping, making popping or wheezing noises, or excessive drooling or discharge. Seek veterinary advice as soon as possible for treatment and check the cleanliness of your vivarium.

MBD (Metabolic Bone Disorder)

This is a weakness of the bones caused by calcium deficiency which results in deformity. The best treatment is prevention. Always make sure your gecko is correctly supplemented with calcium. Symptoms could include sluggishness, refusal of food, poor condition, twisting of the spine or hips or a soft lower jaw. Veterinary advice must be sought as soon as you see any sign of MBD.

Finding a vet

If you have any worries about your crested gecko, please consult your local vet as soon as possible. All vets have a basic understanding of reptiles, but a reptile specialist may be worth finding just in case.

Pet insurance for your crested gecko

You can insure your crested gecko under most exotic pet insurance plans. We always recommend taking pet insurance wherever possible.

Your new pet checklist

- Tank or vivarium
- Vitamin and calcium supplement
- Heat mat or lamp
- Lamp protector (if lamp is used)
- Thermostat
- Shallow water bowl
- Thermometers x 2
- Hygrometers x 2
- UVB tube
- Crickets or locusts of appropriate size
- Cage furnishings
- Bedding (moisture retentive)
- Top covering for bedding (e.g. orchid bark chips)

Help and further advice

If you have any questions about caring for your pet, our fully trained team are happy to help if they can, or advise on where to find more specialist information.

Whilst there is a wealth of information available online, only a professional will be able to correctly answer your query. If in doubt, call your local vet for an appointment.

It is against the law to release, or allow to escape, non-native animals or birds. If you have trouble caring for any animals contact our team for advice.



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