



Live Animal Care Guide

Welcome to Your Live Animal Materials

In this guide you will find the materials and information needed to prepare and care for your leopard gecko.

SK5.4 The Energy of Life

Anchoring Phenomena:
The Energy of Life

Driving Question:
What makes an ecosystem healthy?

Science Center Support Materials

Bag Z

- 2 petri dishes
- 1 spray bottle
- 4 wood blocks, 1”x1”
- 1 tweezers
- 1 small reptile vitamin

Loose Items

- 1 large terrarium
- 1 heat pad
- 2 reptile caves
- 1 roll white paper towels

Vendor Provided

- 1 young Leopard Gecko
- Mealworms (gecko food)

Eublepharis macularius – Leopard Gecko Care Guide

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Your live materials will be priority shipped and require immediate opening upon arrival. It is important that you prepare habitats for their arrival accordingly, as leaving them in their shipping packaging for too long could lead to increased stress for the animals.

Every effort is made to ensure the safe arrival of your gecko. However, if upon receiving your shipment your gecko is clearly ill or dead; please notify us so that we can send a replacement (sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org). Unfortunately, our new vendor will require proof of the deceased animal, so please provide a picture with your email.

Preparing for Arrival

After you have ordered your live material, you will receive a box labeled Grade 5 Gecko Support Materials, from the Science Center. The box will contain everything needed to support your live animal in terms of housing. The animal **food** will be supplied by the vendor and will arrive **separately** from the Science Center materials. **NOTE: You will not be provided a heat lamp for the gecko habitat.** It is **not** necessary in a classroom setting. The terrarium provided is not large enough to support a heat lamp and leave adequate room for a cooler side of the enclosure for the gecko to regulate its temperature.

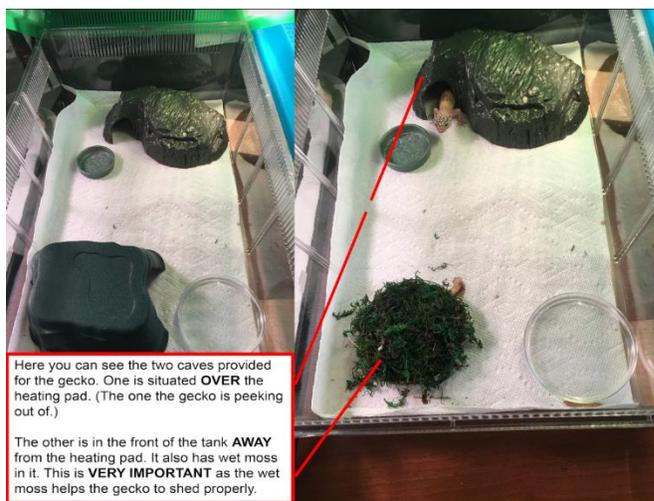
You will receive a large reptile habitat which will serve as home for your new gecko. Your habitat should be fully set up **prior to the arrival of your gecko**. Leopard geckos cannot climb on glass or smooth plastic so habitat height is not an issue.

1. **Heating Pad:** Place the heating pad on the bottom of one side of the terrarium. Geckos are cold-blooded and need heat to help digest their food. To achieve this, place the adhesive heating pad in a **corner on the bottom** of the habitat and leave it on 24 hours a day. Small wooden blocks are provided to raise the habitat off the table, leaving plenty of room for air flow. Place the gecko's cave over this heating pad, as geckos usually prefer to hide during the day and digest their food.



2. **Substrate:** Use **paper towels** to cover the base of the terrarium (**do not use sand or small stones as substrate**). The gecko may ingest these and become impacted). This **needs to be changed weekly**. Thankfully, a gecko will only defecate in one corner making clean up easy.
3. **Hides:** The gecko should be provided two hiding places, a warm and cool hide. The warm hide will be placed over the heating pad. The cool hide will be placed on the opposite side of the terrarium.

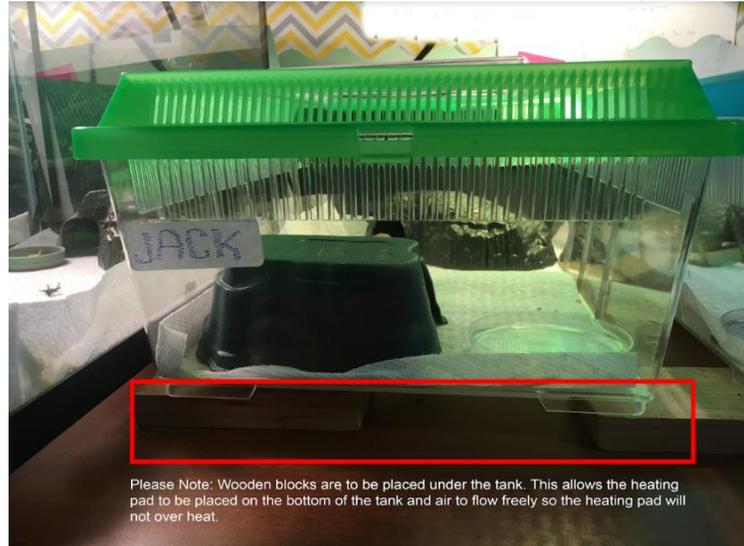
- a. Shown is damp moss placed inside a Petri dish in the cool hide. If you do not wish to provide moss, it is suggested that you dampen a paper towel and place it in the cool separate hide for the gecko. Replace the paper towel every other day. This will help the gecko to shed as needed.



4. **Thermometer:** Geckos do best in a warm environment ranging from 70-84°F, with daytime hours warmer than nighttime hours. Monitor the thermometer attached to the terrarium ensure a safe temperature for your gecko.
5. **Habitat Placement:** Be sure to keep the terrarium out of direct sunlight. For the first few days, place the terrarium in a quiet place in the classroom for the gecko to adjust.

Please note:

- While in previous years the OHM Science Center had provided heating lamps for the geckos, **we will no longer be providing them for the geckos.** There are heating lamps in the kits, but **DO NOT USE IT FOR THE GECKO HABITAT.**
- **Keep the habitat away from windows.**



Arrival Day

Your gecko will arrive safely packed in a sealed, but breathable, container from a **third-party vendor**. Upon arrival do not delay in removing the gecko and placing into the new habitat. Feel free to spend time observing your gecko in its new home **but refrain from handling for a few days to allow for acclimation to the new home.** Your gecko may have limited movement and not eat as it acclimates to its new home as it may experience travel shock. If possible, place the terrarium in a quiet place in your classroom.

If you notice the food provided with your gecko is too big for your gecko please visit your local pet store for cricket nymphs and contact the Science Center ASAP.)



Feeding

Your gecko prefers live food. **Small** crickets, and mealworms are best for the leopard gecko. Superworms and wax worms may be used as a treat for **adult** geckos. With your order of the gecko, you will receive a 100 pack of mealworms and reptile vitamin powder. (If you are missing any of these items, please email sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org. **If you notice the food provided with your gecko is too big for your gecko, please visit your local pet store for cricket nymphs and contact the Science Center ASAP.)** This food



should last your gecko around 1-2 months. Once you have used the food provided, please visit your local pet store to replenish your supply. **(Small crickets are HIGHLY recommend.) Geckos should not be fed anything larger than the width of its head, so it will not choke or suffocate on its meal.**

Feeding your gecko two to three worms three times per week is recommended. Sprinkle the calcium powder in the food dish before adding the mealworms. You may wish to

occasionally corral them back into the food dish. If when you go to feed, you notice that there are still mealworms in the habitat, **please refrain from adding more**. If the gecko does not eat all of the mealworms, they will go through their life cycle and turn, into the pupa stage then into beetles which **will not be eaten** by the gecko. As the gecko grows, you may feed it more mealworms, crickets, etc.

Provide a dish of fresh clean water for your gecko on the opposite side of the habitat from the heating pad. You may want to check the water periodically for stray mealworms/crickets. Fill the dish with water at the end of **every day**.

NOTE: mealworms MUST BE safely stored in a refrigerator (do not freeze-they can be stored for several months without injury) and will reanimate after coming to room temperature. If the mealworms continue through their life cycle, the geckos will NOT eat a pupa or beetle. Once a week you should remove the mealworm container from the refrigerator, sprinkle some oats into the container along with an apple or potato slice for moisture.

Holiday Feeding and Care

Leaving your gecko in the classroom for the weekend is okay. Be sure they have an adequate supply of water. For any long weekends/holiday breaks you will need to take the gecko home. To transport the gecko, empty the water from the dish. Do not place on the seat of your car. Place the terrarium on the floor of your car. If it is during winter, place a towel or blanket around the terrarium to maintain heat, while making sure the gecko has air. Once home, place them in a quiet area of your home, out of reach of any pets. Be sure to set up your terrarium the same way you did in the classroom. Don't forget the mealworms!

Shedding

As a reptile, geckos shed their skin. You will notice that when the gecko is starting this process, the skin will appear very pale, and loose. This is completely normal. **It is important that the gecko not be disturbed or picked up once the shedding process has started.** It is important that the gecko have damp moss or damp paper towels placed into the cool shelter to ease the shedding process. It may take several days for the gecko to shed.



Check the paper towel frequently to make sure it is damp. After the shed is done, **be sure to check the gecko to make sure all shed was removed by the gecko.** The most important area to check are the gecko's toes; left over shed may cause loss of circulation to the toes and may result in loss of them. This is not very common, but it does happen. It is common for a gecko to eat its shed skin after molting. This is a source of energy and nutrition for the gecko.

Handling

Leopard geckos are safe to handle but hands should be **washed before and immediately after** handling all reptiles. This prevents both you and the gecko from becoming ill. Before handling your gecko, **allow time for it to acclimate to its surroundings**. Allow the gecko to examine your hand while still in its habitat. The gecko will most likely lick your finger, its way of checking out who you are.

When handling it is important to be gentle. Allow the gecko to crawl through your loose fingers and over your hands. **Avoid grabbing or holding tightly as this may frighten the gecko and cause it to drop its tail** as a defense mechanism in order to get away faster. Lost tails will regenerate over time. If your gecko feels threatened, it may extend its limbs to stand taller, and scream at you. This is more common in younger geckos, but it is a normal defense for the gecko. The gecko may also bite you if it feels threatened or scared. The bite does not hurt (similar to a clothes pin feeling). Geckos do have teeth, but they are so small, you can hardly see or feel them. Once the gecko is familiarized with you, it will allow you to pick it up, sometimes even crawling freely into your offered hand.

Classroom Observations

In this kit, there are many times the gecko will be used for observation to collect data. For gecko safety, we have provided videos for some experiments.

Please note for Lesson 8:

- Temperature recordings for the gecko have been pre-recorded and are available as a Student Video. ***Please use these to collect your data.***
- Reducing or increasing a gecko's body temperature is not recommended as this can impact their life processes. Our recordings were conducted using an adult gecko with a limited time under duress and an expert was present.

Removal from Classroom

Teachers are free to keep the leopard geckos if they wish. Please note that the terrarium provided is **adequate for the length of the science kit**, as the geckos provided will likely be young. **Teachers who wish to keep the gecko will be responsible for providing a home, food and anything else needed to house/care for the animal. Leopard geckos can grow up to 12 inches long can live for as long as 20 years. As the gecko grows, a larger terrarium (40 gallon) is best.** Local pet stores will have the materials needed.

At some point you may want to say goodbye to your classroom pet. There are a number of ways to safely remove them from your classroom:

1. Sending your classroom pet home with a student(s) is possible only with parent agreement and an understanding of how to appropriately care for the animal. Please confirm with parent. **Student is responsible for providing a home, food and anything else needed to house/care for the animal. Leopard geckos can grow up to 12 inches long can live for as long as 20 years. As the gecko grows, a larger**

terrarium (40 gallon) is best. Please make sure students and parents are aware of this and are ready for the commitment. Suggest that both students and parents read up on geckos before making their final decision.

2. Contact your middle and high school science teachers to see if they have any interest in housing the animal.
3. Contact a local pet store to see if they will accept your gecko.
4. If you are part of OHM BOCES and our couriers go to your school, please email the Science Center at sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org to arrange a live animal pick-up.

IMPORTANT! The leopard gecko is NOT native to the United States and should not be released into the wild.