

African Fattail Gecko Care Sheet



Origin: West Africa Size: 7 – 8 in Life Span: 10 – 15 yrs wpc

Natural history:

Fat tailed geckos are small, easy to care for geckos from West Africa. They're found in savannah habitat, rocky hillsides, river edges, and scrubland. Fat Tailed Geckos are related to Leopard Geckos, in that both species have true eyelids. Fat Tailed Geckos are shyer than their spotted cousins, and are somewhat slower paced than Leopard Geckos as well. Fat tails naturally occur with brown and tan banding, with some individuals having attractive white stripes down their backs. There are numerous pattern mutations that occur in captivity as well, and there is bound to be a color variation that you find appealing among them.

Size and Longevity:

Fat Tailed Geckos commonly reach lengths between 7 and 8". These geckos live about 10 to 15 years in captivity, although longer lifespans are not uncommon.

Caging:

Due to their relatively small adult size, a pair of adult Fat Tailed Geckos can be housed in an average 10 gallon aquarium. One or two babies can be housed directly in the adult sized cage, although if you plan on putting them in a larger cage later it is recommended to start in the 10 gallon. Multiple geckos are best housed in larger cages, and beautiful display cages can be constructed in larger glass tanks.

Heating and Lighting:

Fat Tailed Geckos are nocturnal, which means that they do not require the same bright lighting and UVB set up that diurnal lizards would require. They do require supplemental heat, however, and should be maintained with a hot side of 90 - 95 degrees, and a cool side that is 80 degrees or cooler. In a simplistic set up, all that needs to be used for heat would be an appropriately sized under tank heater. However, for a more advanced or larger setup, use of basking lights during the day and red lights at night is highly recommended to maintain adequate temperatures.

While UVB is not considered absolutely essential to raising Fat Tailed Geckos, it has been shown that providing it can increase the health of animals housed under it. Fat Tailed Geckos housed under UVB tend to be fatter and thrive better than geckos housed without it, so it is recommended to provide at least a 5.0 UVB light that goes across the length of the cage.

All white lights, such as the basking and UVB lights, should be turned on in the morning and off at night. Red lights should be used primarily at night for heat; while they can also provide day time heat, they do not provide light that simulates a day/night cycle. For your gecko's optimal health, it's best to alternate between white lights for daytime and red, black, purple, or "moon light" bulbs for night time.

Cage Furnishings:

While these geckos are cousins to the Leopard Geckos, they do not need to be maintained at the same low humidity that Leopard Geckos can thrive in. It is best to house Fat Tailed Geckos on a substrate that is able to absorb water as well as easily allow it to evaporate, providing spikes in humidity within the cage similar to what the gecko would experience in the wild. Suitable substrates include orchid bark, Forest Floor Cypress Mulch, compressed coconut bedding, or a combination of coconut bedding and sand, although sand should never be used by itself.

As nocturnal animals, Fat Tailed Geckos will spend most of their day hidden and asleep, and should be provided multiple hiding places to accommodate this. At least one hiding spot should be on the warm side, as

well as one on the cool. One of these hiding places can also double as a "humid hide", which means it is a hiding spot with much higher humidity than the rest of the cage. You can create this kind of hiding spot by placing sphagnum moss underneath a hiding place, and simply checking on that moss every day to make sure it stays damp. Hiding places can be anything you think looks neat; as long as the gecko can hide underneath it, the sky is the limit! This means you can use wood products such cork flats, cork rounds, half logs, grapewood, mopani wood, or bamboo hollows. There are also numerous commercially manufactured caves and hiding places, such as fake rock caves, boulder caves, tortoise shell shaped hiding spots, special Reptile Shelters, magnetically attached rock dens, realistic looking rock outcrops, combination water bowl and hiding spots, or even fossil shaped caves.

In addition to all these amazing hiding spots, use of live or fake foliage can help your gecko feel more secure within its cage, as well as provide aesthetic value for you. Live plants can be incorporated into any cage design that also has UVB lighting. Fake plants, such as abutilon vines, fake desert plants, fake cactus hiding holes, various realistic looking silk plants, such as the selaginella plant or button fern, or even use unconventional plants such as Turtle Grass to add a naturalistic look to your cage. The possibilities are endless, and only serve to enrich the life of your gecko!

Humidity and Water Requirements:

Fat Tailed Geckos have very simple humidity requirements. They thrive at average household humidity, between 40 and 60%, but it's okay if it ranges higher or lower. This is especially true if your gecko has a humid hiding place that it can retreat to when it needs higher humidity. They should also be provided a dish of fresh, clean water every day.

Nutritional Requirements:

Fat Tailed Geckos are insectivores, and in captivity can live on a diet consisting mainly of crickets and appropriately sized regular mealworms or giant mealworms. They can also be fed treats such as waxworms, silkworms, or hornworms. Some geckos can be taught to eat off of tweezers, and if you can teach yours to do so you can also offer it a variety of canned insects, such as caterpillars, snails, crickets, or silkworms. The occasional live pinky is relished as well by many adult geckos.

In addition to a varied diet, it is extremely important to dust all insect prey offered to your gecko with a high quality vitamin supplement. The ReptiVite with D3 is an excellent, easy to use supplement, although there are options for the more advanced keeper as well. As long as your supplement provides multivitamins, calcium, AND vitamin D3, it should work for keeping your gecko healthy and happy.

Handling:

When you first bring home your gecko, it's best to allow it several days, even weeks, to settle in to its new home. After it begins to eat and defecate regularly, you can start to handle it occasionally. Handle your gecko as often as you like, as long as it continues to eat. Many Fat Tailed Geckos develop distinct personalities, and soon you will be very familiar with your gecko and its habits. Fat Tailed Geckos are slow moving, and rarely bite, and because of this make excellent beginner pets.