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Aussie Geckos

as pets

General Ecology: Geckos belong to the lizard family GEKKONIDAE. Australian Geckos can be found in a wide variety of habitats, but they reach their greatest diversity in arid, semi-arid and tropical regions. Geckos are nocturnal predators, which feed on a wide variety of insects, such as crickets, moths and beetles. Unlike other lizard species, Geckos don't have eyelids; instead they use their tongues to wipe dirt particles from transparent spectacles that cover their eyes. When alarmed they are capable of emitting a noise in the form of a squeak or bark. All geckos voluntarily lose their tail, for this reason they should not be picked up or caught by the tail. If lost, their tail will grow back, although the pattern and/or colour will not be the same as the original.

Breeding Habits: Sexing Geckos only becomes easy during adulthood, when the enlarged anal region of males easily distinguishes them from females. Geckos are egg layers, which usually lay two parchment-shelled eggs. Under favourable conditions more than one clutch can be laid in a season. Arboreal Gecko species have modified pads on their toes, which enable them to climb surprisingly smooth vertical surfaces including glass. They also have clawed toes, which enables them to dig burrows for habitation and egg laying.

Enclosures: We do not endorse "The minimum size for survival" philosophy of animal keeping; instead we promote "The minimum requirements for quality of life" philosophy. For a pair of terrestrial geckos (best kept only in pairs) we recommend a vivarium made of glass, plastic or timber, with dimensions of 51cm L x 30cm H x 40cm W. Most Geckos can handle lower temperatures than other reptiles, however you still need to provide a heat source in the form of a reptile heat mat. This is placed under the vivarium at one end to create a temperature gradient. Over this area, a humidity box should be placed. This box should consist of a moistened substrate; the same that is used in the vivarium such as white brickies sand or dirt from central Australia known as "red dirt". The humidity box will provide the animal with a place to hide during the day. Some species will burrow into this substrate making tunnels to live in. Also this humidity box will help the Gecko maintain its body hydration levels by slowing down evaporation from their skin. For a colony of one male and two to three females of arboreal geckos, we recommend a vivarium size of 51cm L x 45cm H x 35cm W. Arboreal Geckos spend most of their time on tree trunks under bark or between rock surfaces. These types of hiding places need to be provided on the wall area of the vivarium.

Captive Care: Geckos need to be fed a variety of insects at least every third or fourth day, warmer temperatures will require more regular feeding. Drowning can be prevented by providing a small shallow water dish, which should be placed at the opposite end of the enclosure to the heat mat. Geckos obtain most of their moisture from their food, however they do also require a misting of the walls of their enclosure or box, which forms droplets of water that the Geckos will lick off. Enclosures must be kept clean at all times.

Commonly kept Gecko species: **Terrestrial species:** Barking Gecko (*Underwoodisaurus milii*), Three-lined Knob-tailed Gecko (*Nephrurus levis*), Eastern Stone Gecko (*Diplodactylus vittatus*), Bynoe's Prickly Gecko (*Heteronotia binoei*) and Rough Knob-tailed Gecko (*N. asper*). **Arboreal species:** Marbled Velvet Gecko (*Oedura marmorata*), Robust Velvet Gecko (*O. robusta*), Southern Spotted Velvet Gecko (*O. tryoni*), Broad-tailed Gecko (*Phyllurus platurus*), Southern leaf-tailed gecko (*P. cornutus*) and Eastern Spiny-tailed Gecko (*D. williamsi*).

Licence Requirements: Carefully check the licence requirements, which apply to your State or Territory.

Protected Species: Don't remove any protected native wildlife from the wild. They can now and should only be obtained legally from licensed keepers and pet dealers. Finally, you must ask yourself why do you want to keep these animals? Australian Geckos require a reasonable level of care if they are to be successfully kept in a captive environment. If you don't think you can provide the right habitat for them, consider keeping another less demanding reptile to gain keeping experience. There is nothing more rewarding than watching your animal's "behavioural antics" in a natural looking micro-habitat that suits all their needs and your animals will be happier for it.

**For the acquisition of geckos and further information
ring Shane at Gates of Eden Nature Centre on (02) 4973 3858**