



## Fat-tailed Geckos

*Hemiteconix caudicinctus*

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Native to West Africa, fat-tailed geckos are generally mild tempered and make good pets. A new fat-tailed gecko can be skittish, but once they are used to their new human, they are typically calm lizards. Fat-tailed geckos can live 10-15 years, grow to be 7-10 inches long and weigh an average of 50-80g. Be careful not to pick geckoes up by their tails as they can fall off through a predator defense mechanism known as autotomy. Albino & leucistic variations are more sensitive to ultraviolet light.

**Health care:** Geckos can be very good at hiding illness. We recommend biannual exams and fecal float. Weighing your pet at home can be a good way to catch illnesses early. Please bring them in to see us if their weight changes by 10%, or more. Common problems are intestinal obstruction, and egg binding. Remember with any disease processes, the sooner we see the animal, the more successful we are at treating it!

**Husbandry concerns:** Fat-tailed geckos can be housed alone but can be kept in groups, with all females or only one male present. Determining the sex of immature geckos is imprecise, so realize that as they mature, they may need separate housing. Handling should be limited for the first few weeks until the gecko is used to its new home. The cage for the adult gecko should be at least 2 feet long x 1 foot wide per gecko. They are ground dwellers so climbing items should be limited to small rocks or pieces of wood on the ground. Hiding areas should be low to the ground, lightweight, and not stacked items that could collapse. Small cardboard boxes work well and are disposable. At least one humidity box lined with sphagnum moss and misted daily should be provided. The bottom of the cage should be lined with newspaper or artificial turf for easy cleaning, which should be done once a week. The rest of the cage should be cleaned with a dilute bleach solution with 1/8 cup bleach to 1 gallon water. A heat lamp or ceramic heating element should provide a basking spot with a temperature of 90-95°F. Make sure the gecko cannot touch the heat lamp. The rest of the cage should have a temperature gradient down to 80°F. Do not use hot rocks or pads as they can cause thermal burns! The nighttime temperature can fall to about 70°F when the light is off. Measure temperature using a digital thermometer. A water container should be very shallow. The water should be changed daily, as the gecko may defecate in the water. Daily misting with a water bottle may help to maintain a higher humidity. This is especially important during shedding. Also during shedding, soak the toes of the gecko in shallow warm water every day

**More on the back!**

until fully shed. Healthy geckos eat their shed, so shedding is not normally noticed. A hide box reduces stress, allowing avoidance of people if desired. One should be dry, while another should be a humidity box, with moistened, healthy looking sphagnum moss (moisten every day, changed out weekly).

**Diet:** Fat-tailed geckos are insectivores. Juveniles should be fed everyday with a mixture of small insects such as crickets, earthworms and rarely mealworms. Wild grasshoppers are also good. The prey items should be no larger than the gecko's head is wide. Until active feeding time, house all insects in a separate container from the gecko. Crickets should be gut-loaded with a formula, such as T-rex, or fresh vegetables for 3-4 days and a small moist sponge for water then dusted with a calcium powder (crushed cherry Tums work well). Grasshoppers can be fed directly. Earthworms are kept in healthy soil with some crushed Tums mixed in. Adults should be feed every other day, though monitor weight. Do not feed fireflies! They are poisonous! Mealworms and waxworms are mostly fat and not nutritionally adequate. Any insects not eaten within 30 minutes should be removed from the gecko's cage, as they may actually chew on the gecko. Healthy geckoes should have a fat tail.

**Sexing:** Males are generally larger with more prominent pre-femoral pores.

