



## Gargoyle Gecko

*rhacodactylus auriculatus.*

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Gargoyle geckos are originally from New Caledonia. Gargoyle geckos frequently lose their tails by adulthood, as it can come off in a defense mechanism known as autotomy. Geckos that still have their tails should never be grabbed by the tail for this reason. Gargoyle gecko's are also somewhat infamous for nipping each other on the tail, causing cage mates to drop their tails. Gargoyle geckos reach an adult size of 4-5 inches(not including tail). They can live 15 to 20 years.

**Health care:** Gargoyle geckos can be very good at hiding illness. We recommend biannual exams, with fecal parasite screening and x-rays, to make sure your pet is healthy! Common problems are intestinal parasites, anorexia, and intestinal obstruction. Remember with any disease processes, the sooner we see the animal, the more successful we are at treating it!

**Husbandry concerns:** Do not house with species from other countries, to prevent exposure to new diseases. Excessive handling while they are new should be avoided. Gargoyle geckos can be housed singly, in groups of females or one male with 2 or more females. Do not house more than one male together as they will fight. Terrariums that are taller than they are wide are preferred as gargoyle geckos are arboreal (tree dwelling). The minimum tank size for a gargoyle gecko is a 20 gallon. Screen cages or glass tanks with screen tops work well. Use newspaper, large rocks or artificial turf as a substrate on the bottom of the cage. Provide lots of items to climb on! Gargoyle geckos would rather sit in tangles of leaves high up than in caves on the ground. Non-toxic live plants, like bromeliads can be great and help keep up humidity. A ceramic heat lamp should provide a focal basking spot of 78-82°F, while the rest of the cage should have a gradient down to the low 70's°F. At night, the cage can cool down to 65-75°F. At temperatures over 84F, gargoyle geckos can become stressed, so a heat lamp may not be required or advisable during all seasons, in a warm climate. Do not allow contact with the lamp. Do not use hot rocks or pads as they can easily cause thermal burns! At night, make sure lights are off. Use a digital thermometer for temperature measurement and measure at the level where the skink lives. A UV light is necessary, and should provide 12 hours of light with 2-5% UVB. In the wild, gargoyle geckos drink water droplets off of leaves. Some may not figure out how to use a water dish. Use either a water drip system or ice cubes on a mesh cage top and allow them to melt and drip on leaves beneath with a water dish below them. This may also help geckos learn to use a water dish as the water splashing attracts their attention. Alternatively, the cage can be misted twice daily. Be sure that the water dish is shallow and

**More on the back!**

geckos can climb out of it if they fall in to prevent drowning! Humidity should be maintained at 50-70% and monitored using a hygrometer. Misting the cage or using a humidifier may be helpful.

**Diet:** In the wild, gargoyle geckos have a complex diet of insects and fruits. Formulated diets have been developed specifically for gargoyle geckos, making them easy to feed in captivity. They tend to do well on brands such as Repashy Superfoods or Pangea crested gecko diets. These diets are rehydrated with water, placed out in the evening and left until morning, for the gecko to eat as much as they want. Feed gargoyle geckos every other day. This diet should be supplemented with insects, offered 1-3 times per week. Be sure any wild caught insects are pesticide free! Do not feed fireflies! They are poisonous! Captive-raised insects need to be fed either a gut-loading diet available at the pet-store, or a special diet recommended by your veterinarian. These insects should be misted in a zip-loc bag, then shake-and-baked with a calcium-only powder coating before feeding to the gecko (we recommend using Tums crushed into a powder: avoid mixes with vitamins, especially vitamin D or phosphorus). Insects not eaten by the morning after feeding should be removed from the cage so they do not chew on the gecko! Gargoyle geckos can also be given small pieces of fruit, as treats. Many like mango, papaya and berries.

