



CONCISE CARE SHEETS

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CHINESE CAVE GECKO

INTRO

Cave geckos are nocturnal, terrestrial lizards that are both easy to care for and straightforward to breed. The Chinese Cave Gecko (*Goniurosaurus hainanensis*) is native to two islands of China, Hainan and Cat Ba. Due to its striking appearance and ease of care, this beautiful gecko is becoming enormously popular with reptile keepers. Adults reach eight inches and can normally be housed at room temperatures with no supplemental heat.

GENERAL CARE & FEEDING

Like most geckos, Chinese Cave Geckos do very well housed alone. Keepers who wish to produce offspring may consider keeping a male and female together year-round. A ten gallon tank or similarly sized terrarium such as those made by ExoTerra and ZooMed is adequate housing for one to two adults. See HOUSING section below for information on terrarium set-up.

Chinese Cave Geckos are insectivorous. They will thrive on appropriately-sized (width of gecko head) crickets and dubia roaches. Crickets and/or roaches should be gut-loaded with nutritious foods for twenty-four hours prior to being offered as prey and should be coated with a quality reptile vitamin supplement. Black soldier fly larvae (aka ReptiWorms™ or Phoenix Worms®), waxworms, butterworms and, occasionally, small mealworms may be offered to provide beneficial variety to the diet.

Chinese Cave Geckos store fat in their tails and a well-fed gecko will have a plump tail. Monitoring the condition and size of the tail will help the keeper ensure that the gecko is sufficiently fed and hydrated. A small shallow water dish kept filled with fresh water will provide a drinking source.

HOUSING

A ten gallon tank or terrarium of similar size is adequate for a single adult Chinese Cave Gecko or a pair of adults. Something along the lines of ExoTerra's 18x18x12 glass terrarium can be used to make an attractive home and may house several adult cave geckos. However, only one male should be housed in each cage as they are territorial and will battle.

Coconut fiber (e.g., EcoEarth®) makes a fine substrate, but a 50/50 mix of peat moss and sand may also be used. Terrarium moss can be added to the surface to enhance the beauty of the terrarium and keeping it moist in one corner of the enclosure will help provide some humidity. Hiding places should be provided and slabs of virgin cork bark and the reptile caves and hiding places found in the pet trade make excellent retreats. A few rocks can be added to the decor and a water dish is essential.

In most homes Chinese Cave Geckos will thrive at ambient room temperatures and supplemental heating is not required. Temperatures over 80°F should be avoided and high temperatures may be quickly lethal. Most home are kept in the 65-75°F range throughout the year and cave geckos do quite well at this same range.

Since Chinese Cave Geckos are active at night, they don't require the UV exposure that many pet lizards do and a simple fluorescent light can be used to illuminate the terrarium so its beauty can be enjoyed during the day. This is especially important if you choose to decorate the terrarium with any live plants. Any lighting should be controlled by a timer to ensure that these nocturnal geckos get at least twelve hours of darkness. Some keepers may choose to add a terrarium fixture with a low-wattage red bulb to aid in viewing these geckos at night when they are active.

HOUSING YOUNG CAVE GECKOS

Hatchling and juvenile cave geckos may be raised in groups, but there is the risk that feeding dominance may cause more timid or smaller young to not thrive, and feeding behavior may cause some to lose their tails. These tails will regenerate, but never look as perfect and many keepers prefer to raise young cave geckos individually.

A plastic shoe box with ventilation holes added by drilling or melting with a

QUICK TIPS

- » Keep cool and humid. Room temps of 65-75°F are fine. High temps can be lethal - prevent temps over 80°F. Humidity 50-75%.
- » Eats insects. Thrives on crickets and dubia roaches.
- » Active at night.

soldering iron is a fine rearing container for young cave geckos. A layer of paper toweling is all that is needed for substrate, and this allows for convenient and frequent cage cleanings that will benefit the young geckos health. It also removes the risk of substrate ingestion. An opaque plastic container like an empty spreadable cream cheese tub can be used to make a simple retreat. It should have an entrance hole cut in the side that is large enough for the gecko, but small enough that it keeps out as

much light as possible and makes for a secure retreat. Damp sphagnum moss should be placed inside and kept moist so that the gecko has sufficient humidity.

HANDLING & ACTIVITY

Young cave geckos are best left alone and not handled, but larger specimens can be carefully handled if desired. Adults will learn to tolerate occasional gentle handling.

HEALTH

Chinese Cave Geckos are hardy lizards that are easy to raise if their basic care and environmental parameters are met. Occasional skin-sloughing difficulties may be indicators of insufficient humidity. A hide box filled with damp sphagnum moss should alleviate this problem.

SEXING CHINESE CAVE GECKOS

Chinese Cave Geckos begin to mature at about five or six months of age. At this time, male geckos will begin to show distinct bulges at the base of the tail where their hemipenes lie inside.

BREEDING CHINESE CAVE GECKOS

All that is necessary to breed cave geckos is housing an adult sexual pair together. However, breeding success can be enhanced by cooling the pair below their normal range for a few months during the winter. Mating generally takes place between February and September and during this period females will lay a pair of eggs every 30-45 days. An egg-laying container such as a margarine tub with an entrance hole cut into the lid must be provided. Fill the container with moist vermiculite or sphagnum moss. Extra care should be taken with breeding females to ensure they get enough food that has been gut-loaded and dusted at each feeding with a quality calcium supplement. A great deal of her calcium stores will go into egg production and need to be replenished during the breeding season.

Those who choose to breed these geckos should consider removing the male in July or August to give the female a break. Egg-laying uses her resources and having a few months alone to eat more food before the winter cooling will ensure she has a healthy reproductive life. Male and female can be housed together again after the cooling period.

