

Crested Gecko Care Guide

Second Chance Reptile Rescue | www.secondchancereptiles.com

Crested Geckos (often called "Eyelash Geckos") are fantastic pets that look like tiny dragons. Because they do not require high-heat lamps, they are often considered the easiest reptile to keep. However, they are sensitive to high temperatures and dehydration. A rescue crestie might come to you with a "frog butt" (no tail), but don't worry, it doesn't affect their quality of life at all!



🦎 Quick Stats

- Lifespan: 15–20 years
- Adult Size: 8–10 inches (including tail)
- Personality: Jumpy but Handleable, Arboreal (Lives in trees), & Crepuscular/Nocturnal
- Difficulty: Easy (No complex heating, but humidity is key)

⌚ The Rescue "Settling In" Period (The 3-3-3 Rule)

- 3 Days to Decompress: They will likely hide in the foliage. Do not handle them. They may not eat right away.
- 3 Weeks to Learn Routine: Start offering food on a schedule. You can begin short handling sessions (keep them close to the floor in case they jump!).
- 3 Months to Feel at Home: They will know their feeding spots and tolerate handling well.

Housing: Height is Everything

Crested geckos are arboreal. They need height to exercise their muscles and prevent spinal issues like Floppy Tail Syndrome (FTS).

- **Minimum Enclosure Size:**
 - **Hatchlings (<12g):** 12" x 12" x 12".
 - **Juveniles & Adults (>12g):** 18" x 18" x 36" is the new ethical minimum.
 - Note: Many pet stores still sell 18x18x24s. These are too short for an active adult. Bigger is always better!.
- **Decor:** You must fill the tank with branches, vines, and plants. If there is too much open air, the gecko will feel exposed.
- **Co-Habitation: NO.** We do not recommend housing geckos together. It leads to fighting, tail loss, and resource guarding.

Substrate (Flooring)

- **The Best (Natural):** A DIY mix of organic topsoil (60%) and coconut fiber (40%), or bioactive mixes like Bio Dude Terra Fauna.
 - Why? Holds humidity best and looks natural.
- **For Quarantine:** Paper towels. Cheap, sterile, and easy to monitor poop.
- **✗ AVOID:** Reptile Carpet (traps claws/bacteria), Wood Chips (impaction risk), and Cedar/Pine (toxic oils).

Lighting & Heating (The Big Correction)

A common myth is that Crested Geckos "don't need heat." This is false. They are ectotherms and need warmth to digest food.

- **Temperature Gradient:**
 - **Basking Area (Top):** 82°F – 85°F.
 - **Cool Area (Bottom):** 70°F – 75°F.
 - **Nighttime:** 65°F – 72°F.
- **Heat Source:** Use a low-wattage Incandescent or Halogen bulb (25w is usually plenty) or a Nano Ceramic Heat Emitter. Avoid colored "night bulbs" (red/blue) as they mess with sleep cycles.
- **UVB Light:** Highly Recommended.
 - The Bulb: Arcadia ShadeDweller 7% or Reptisun 5.0.
 - Why? Even though they hide during the day, UVB improves their immune system and prevents MBD.

Humidity: The Cycle

Crested geckos need a specific humidity cycle to prevent mold and respiratory infections.

- **Target:** 60% – 80%.
 - **The "Dry Out":** You must let the tank drop to 50% during the day before misting again at night. Constant wetness causes bacterial skin infections.
- **Water:** Always provide a small water dish. They *do* drink from bowls!.





Diet: The "Prepared Diet" Standard

We do not feed baby food. It has too much sugar and zero nutritional value.

- **The Staple:** Complete Gecko Diet (CGD).
 - **Recommended Brands:** Pangea, Repashy, Arcadia, or Black Panther Zoological (BPZ).
 - **How to Serve:** Mix with water to a "ketchup" consistency. Serve in a wall-mounted ledge (they don't like eating on the floor!).
- **Schedule:**
 - **Juveniles:** CGD Daily. Insects 1-2x/week.
 - **Adults:** CGD every 2-3 days. Insects 0-1x/week.
- **Insects (Enrichment):** Dubia roaches or crickets dusted with calcium. This helps with growth and exercise.
 - *Rule of Thumb:* The bug should be no wider than the space between the gecko's eyes.

🚩 When to Call a Vet (Red Flags)

- **Weight Loss:** If hip bones are visible or tail looks "wavy" (signs of MBD or dehydration).
- **Lethargy:** If they are sluggish or refusing to stick to the glass (often caused by being too cold).
- **Floppy Tail Syndrome (FTS):** The tail flops over the back when upside down. This is caused by a lack of horizontal perches.
- **Frog Butt (Tail Loss):** NOT an emergency. If a gecko drops its tail, it will not grow back. Keep the wound clean, but the gecko will live a perfectly happy life without it.