

Roger's Aquatics & Pet Supplies: Gargoyle Geckos

Rhacodactylus auriculatus is an easy to care for, but still unique looking species from New Caledonia. They are very similar to the more common Crested Gecko. Under proper care, gargoyle geckos can live 15 – 20 years, and attain an adult size of 8 inches long. Gargoyles can drop their tails, but will slowly grow back another one. This species is nocturnal, meaning they are most active at night.

Enclosure: Size, Substrate, and Accessories

Younger gargoyle geckos should be started in a 10 gallon aquarium, or a 12" L by 12" W by 18" H Exo Terra/Zoo Med Terrarium. It is important not to start them off in something too large, as they may have trouble finding their food. Adult geckos can be housed in a 20 gallon tall, or an 18" L by 18" W by 24" H Exo Terra/Zoo Med terrarium. Height is more important than length for this species, as they are arboreal.

Gargoyle geckos can be kept on a variety of substrates, including coco coir products (such as Eco Earth or Plantation Soil), ReptiSoil, or Arcadia substrates. Reptile carpets are popular as well, but maintaining humidity with them can be more difficult. A leaf litter layer with or without moss can also be used to help keep the humidity up, as well as create a more naturalistic environment. It is important to note that there is a risk of impaction with any animal that is being housed on loose substrate. Typically, impaction only occurs with animals that are dehydrated, not receiving adequate lighting or diet, or in some other way are unhealthy, and it is much rarer than people think, but if you choose to keep your animal on loose substrate you should familiarize yourself with the signs of impaction and see what local vets deal with reptiles. The substrate should be changed out every 3 – 4 months, unless it is bioactive.

Being arboreal, décor is very important to these geckos. The terrarium should have plenty of vines, branches, and plants for the gecko to hide in. During the day, some gargoyle geckos may choose to rest on the bottom, so a hollow log or cave of some kind should also be added.

Lighting and Heat

During the day, a warm area of 78 – 82 F (25.5 – 27.7 C) should be provided. A low wattage daylight basking light can be used to achieve this. At night, the temperature can comfortably drop to 70 – 73 F (21.1 – 22.7 C) if the temperature drops lower than this, a ceramic heat emitter can be used at night to warm the tank. A proper thermometer should always be used to measure the temperature. Too hot, and the animal could overheat. Too cold, and they won't grow properly or won't digest properly. Digital is preferred, since it is more accurate.

A UVB light is not considered necessary for geckos that are on a proper diet, but it does not hurt to have on the terrarium either. If provided, a 5.0 UVB bulb should be used.

Lighting should be on for 12 hours per day, and then the gecko should have a period of darkness.

Diet and Supplements

The main portion of the gargoyle's diet should be a trusted commercial diet, such as Repashy or Pangea. Both brands are nutritionally complete, so it comes down to a matter of preference for which brand the gecko is fed. Having two flavours is a good idea, so that the gecko gets a varied diet and doesn't get bored of the food.



Gargoyles can be fed small amounts of crickets one – two times a week. All feeder insects should be gut loaded 1 – 24 hours before being fed, and the crickets should be dusted with a calcium with D3 supplement. As a special treat, gargoyles can also be offered hornworms, butterworms, and waxworms.

Hydration and Humidity

The humidity levels should be kept at a base of 50%, with spikes of up to 80% during mistings. The tank should be sprayed 2 – 3 times a day to maintain this. Alternatively, a automatic misting system can be hooked up and adjusted as need to keep the humidity up. The dry out period between mistings is important – a tank that is always soaking wet can lead to skin infections. A proper hygrometer should always be used to measure the humidity levels. Digital is preferred, since it's more accurate.

A shallow water dish should be present at all times. The water should be replaced every second day, and the dish should be bleached once a week to prevent the growth of bacteria.

Cohabitation

Males should never be housed together as they will fight. Females can sometimes be housed together, if a larger tank with more hiding spots is provided. Male/female groups should be avoided unless there is the intention to breed, and the means to raise and, if needed, keep all the babies. The male should still have his own tank to return to so that the females may have a break from the stress of breeding.

Sexing

Gargoyle geckos can be difficult to sex until they are 15 – 20 grams in weight. At this time, males will develop hemipenal bulges between their vent and tail. Males will also have a set of V-shaped pores above the vent. With younger geckos, these pores can sometimes be seen using a jeweller's loupe. Females may have a set of "pseudo pores" – scales in the same area where the male's pores would be that very much look like the real thing, when they in fact aren't.

Checklist of Supplies

- ✓ Enclosure
- ✓ Lid for enclosure
- ✓ Substrate or carpet
- ✓ Heat lamp and bulb
- ✓ UVB bulb and fixture (optional)
- ✓ Thermometer
- ✓ Hygrometer
- ✓ Calcium with D3
- ✓ Minimum 2 fake plants
- ✓ Minimum two branches
- ✓ Water dish
- ✓ Food dish
- ✓ Pangea/Repashy
- ✓ Spray bottle/misting system

