

Crested Gecko (*Correlophus (Rhacodactylus) ciliatus*)

Introduction to Crested Geckos

Crested geckos are found in nature on New Caledonia, and group of islands near Australia. They have an incredibly interesting history in the hobby of reptile keeping and were even believed to be extinct at one point. Crested Geckos are excellent reptile pets because they are hardy and have care requirements that are easy to meet. These geckos are arboreal (spend their time in the trees), so they do very well in vertically oriented naturalistic setups.

Both male and female Crested Geckos grow to 4" - 5" with the tail adding another 3" - 4" to their total length. Males are easily discerned from the females by having large hemipenial bulges on the underside at the base of the tail. Crested Geckos are sexually mature at 15 to 18 months of age.

Captive Care of Crested Geckos

Like all lizards, Crested Geckos must be kept at the proper temperature range for activity and feeding. Placing a thermometer inside their enclosure is essential for accurate temperature measurements. They require temperatures in the 78° to 82° F range during the day. Temperatures can drop to the low 70s at night and a bit cooler during the winter months.

We suggest a substrate of a mixture of 1/2 topsoil and 1/2 shredded cypress mulch or coconut fiber. This substrate is also excellent for any live plants you place inside the vivarium. Pothos ivy, English ivy, Ficus, and other hardy houseplants are excellent additions to their enclosure. Add in cork bark sections for shelter and some branches angled across the length of the vivarium for resting and climbing.

The easiest way to provide heat is by placing a 50 or 60-watt incandescent bulb in a clamp lamp fixture (with a ceramic receptacle) on a sturdy screen top over one end of the vivarium. This will create a warm basking area. Place branches under this hot spot that allows the gecko to come closer to get warm or to move away from the heat if it gets too hot. Make sure that the other end of the enclosure remains unheated so that the gecko can choose a cooler area if required. Many keepers also use a reptile heat mat under the enclosure to maintain a constant source of warmth.

Crested Geckos are nocturnal and hide in foliage or in cork bark tubes during the day, so they do not require UVB light if fed a diet that contains some added Vitamin D3. A red light can be added at night so you can view your Crested Gecko exploring its habitat.

Watering Crested Geckos

Clean water should always be available in a shallow water dish. The ideal environmental humidity level should be around 50% to 70%. This can be difficult indoors so a keeper should be prepared to mist the geckos with purified water in a spray bottle each evening. A water dish placed over the area warmed by a heat mat can help as well. An inexpensive hygrometer (relative humidity gauges) should be added to the vivarium to keep tabs on the humidity level.

More on Crested Geckos

As you explore the possibility of getting a Crested Gecko for a pet, you will see that many are tailless. This is, interestingly, a normal condition for adults both in nature and in captivity. Geckos will lose their tails from stress, a fight, rough handling, and sometimes what seems like a very minor intrusion into their enclosure by a keeper. Many end up with a tiny pointed tail nub. It takes a very focused and slow-moving keeper to prevent tail loss in his or her gecko vivarium. Losing its tail does not affect the overall health of these geckos.

If you purchase a Crested Gecko at a pet store or reptile expo, give them a month to settle in to their new home before handling them. Feed them and make sure they are eating well. When you start handling them, make handling sessions short (five minutes) and handle them close to the ground as they are likely to jump. Baby Crested Geckos are more skittish than adults and can be injured in the course of handling.

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Feeding Crested Geckos

Commercial diets such as Repashy Superfoods "Crested Gecko" Diet have played a key role in making these among the most popular of lizard pets, because keepers no longer need to buy live insects. In addition to commercial powder diets, insects such as crickets, roaches, and waxworms can be offered as the primary diet or as a supplement to the commercial diets. The feeder insects should be lightly dusted with a vitamin/mineral supplement that contains calcium, Vitamin D3, and other essential vitamins and minerals. Adults can be offered feeder insects three times a week and small dish of commercial diet two or three times a week.

