

# Gargoyle Gecko Care Sheet



## Common Name:

Gargoyle Gecko

## Latin name:

*Rhacodactylus Auriculatus*

## Native to:

New Caledonia

## Size:

Gargoyle geckos are a large and robust lizard growing up to 5" not tail (SVL).

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## General appearance:

Gargoyle geckos come in 2 major patterns: reticulated and striped. Their patterns resemble granite and can be white, gray, red or brown. Some gargoyles can have red or orange blotches and stripes against their granite pattern. They also have 2 bony knobs on the top of their head.

## Enclosure:

Gargoyle geckos can be housed solo or in pairs. Males will not tolerate each other and will fight if housed together. Females tend to be more aggressive with each other or males. Males and females kept together will inevitably breed whether it is your intention or not, so be careful! Gargoyles are notorious lizard-eaters so it is not unusual for them to pester cagemates and make a meal out of their tale! A single gecko can be kept in a 10 gallon tank and be perfectly comfortable. A pair can also be kept in a 10-gallon tank, but a 20-gallon tank is preferred when housing 2-3 geckos to avoid stress. Young should be housed solo to avoid cannibalism.

## Temperature:

Gargoyle geckos prefer a cooler ambient temperature around room temperature. They can tolerate temperatures at night in the lower 60's, but daytime temperatures should not drop below 65° F. Unlike most lizards, gargoyles do not like high temperatures and the enclosure should not exceed 80° F for an extended time.

## Heat/Light:

Gargoyle geckos do not require an additional heat source as long as temperatures don't drop below 65° F. Too much heat is actually bad for these geckos that prefer a much more temperate climate. Temperatures above 80° F can become dangerous. Because they are nocturnal, gargoyle geckos do not require UV light, but still benefit from being exposed to a natural light cycle. Enclosure lighting also help you, the keeper, by allowing you to view your gecko.

## Substrate:

Many keepers use paper towel as a substrate because it is easy to clean and eliminates the risk of the gecko swallowing the substrate and becoming impacted. If you want a more natural looking substrate with a very LOW risk of impaction, coco fiber is an excellent alternative.

## Environment:

Gargoyle geckos enjoy lots of vertical space to move around and places to hide and sleep during the day. They also greatly benefit from lots of horizontal branches or vines to climb on. It is important to provide these horizontal climbing surfaces if you want to avoid your gecko developing a floppy tail. Floppy tail syndrome (FTS) occurs when the gecko spends too much time upside down or in the head-down position and its heavy tail flops over to one side. This does not cause immediate harm to the lizard but can cause stress on the gecko's hip and pelvis bones. You can use real or fake plants as decoration. The benefit of using live plants is they naturally increase humidity in the enclosure that promotes better shedding.

## Diet:

Gargoyle geckos are omnivorous and benefit from a balanced diet. There is a meal replacement powder (MRP) that was specially designed by Allen Repashy for rhacodactylus geckos and other fruit-loving geckos like phelsuma. It contains all the gecko's nutritional requirements and contains beta carotene that helps promote more vivid red, orange and yellow color in your animals. Many keepers use this MRP and this alone which is perfectly fine while others include crickets for extra protein. Both are perfectly

acceptable, but if you do not use the MRP you will need to dust your crickets with calcium powder. Gargoyles tend to prefer bigger bugs and may ignore crickets if they are too small. Some petstores and old books encourage the feeding of baby food. DO NOT use baby food for your geckos as it is high in sugar and low in nutrition which will lead to metabolic bone disease! You can provide a water dish, but this will likely go used except for when it is used as a latrine. A better way to provide water (and humidity) is by thoroughly spraying the enclosure at least once a day in the evening.

### **Breeding:**

Gargoyle geckos are not quite as prolific breeders as crested, but will breed easily if kept in the proper conditions. To breed, all you really have to do is house a male and a female (or 2) together and wait. Males and females should be similar sizes when breeding. Females should typically not be bred before they reach a healthy weight of 40g or so (about 2 years old). This will ensure more viable eggs. If possible, males should be bigger than females to avoid bullying. Keep your female well-fed when breeding if you want your male to keep his original tail! Gargoyles will lay a clutch of 2 soft-shelled eggs about every 4 weeks. A single female can lay between 6-10 eggs in a typical season. Incubation temperature of eggs will influence hatch times. If you choose to use a commercial incubator at 75-80° the eggs will hatch in 60-70 days. If left in a proper egg container at room temperature it is not unusual to take longer than 90 days. Eggs that are incubated at lower temperatures (around 70°) will result in bigger hatchlings.

Hatchlings should be housed solo because gargoyles tend to eat toes, tail and sometimes the entire cagemate if they can. If you choose to house them in groups, feed them very well and provide plenty of cover to hide from bullies. They will begin feeding 7-10 days after hatching once they have absorbed the remaining yolk completely. They can be fed the MRP at this point or small-medium crickets. Just like the parents, baby gargoyles prefer larger prey items. Many keepers have an initial fear that babies are not eating when they don't see much MRP missing from the bowl. It is important to remember the size of the baby's stomach. You may not see the food missing, but if you find poop your gecko is eating just fine! It is STRONGLY encouraged that you keep hatchlings and young geckos on a paper towel substrate to avoid impaction. Humidity is also very important to ensure proper shedding so the young geckos do not lose tails or toes. Unlike crested geckos, gargoyles' tails do grow back! You should spray babies 2x daily, once in the morning and once in the evening to ensure proper hydration and humidity.

### **Maintenance:**

The enclosure should be spot cleaned daily and thoroughly cleaned monthly. Gargoyle gecko poo can be messy if you add too much water to the MRP. With very basic needs, these animals require very little maintenance to thrive and make excellent pets.

## **Other references or recommended reading:**

### **Rhacodactylus: The Complete Guide to their Selection and Care**

Written by Philippe de Vosjoli, Frank Fast, and Allen Repashy

290 pages, 250 color photos - Published by Advanced Visions, Inc