



Crested Gecko Care

Ness Exotic Wellness Center

1007 Maple Avenue

Lisle, IL 60532

(630) 737-1281



General Information

Scientific Name: *Correlophus ciliatus*

Lifespan: 15-20 years

Size: 7.5-8" with tail

Crested Geckos are native to New Caledonia, located approximately 900 miles east of Australia. They are indigenous to the islands, Grand Terre and Isle of Pines. Due to Crested Geckos not being seen in their native environments, they were believed to be extinct. In 1994, the species was found on the Isle de Pines. Crested Geckos are arboreal and nocturnal, spending their days hiding amongst leaves and branches.

Housing

Ensure the tank/enclosure is large enough to accommodate plenty of climbing sources. Lack of climbing options in the cage can find the gecko hanging upside down on the walls of the enclosure, which can lead to Floppy Tail Syndrome. The tail flopping over the back will cause undue stress on the gecko's pelvis and can deform it. This will give your gecko a crooked appearance.

Crested Geckos are arboreal and need enclosures that are taller, rather than longer. A single full grown adult or a breeding pair will do well in a 12 x 12 x 18" tall glass terrarium or 10 gallon aquarium. Groups of 3 or more should be housed in a 18 x 18 x 24" tall glass terrarium or tank of that equivalent.

Make sure there are plenty of objects for your gecko to climb on and hide in. Fake plants, magnetic ledges/food dishes, and fake vines can all be utilized to give your enclosure more of a naturalistic look. Egg cartons and toilet paper rolls can be a really inexpensive and safe alternative decoration

Grown male crested geckos are very territorial and should never be housed in the same enclosure. This can lead to stress, fighting and most likely injury to one if not both males. When housing multiple geckos in the same enclosure make sure to note that there is no bullying going

on. Even among female geckos, fighting/bullying has been known to go on if there are not enough resources to go around.

Baby/Juvenile Geckos less than 12-15 grams in size should be housed in smaller enclosures to ensure success at finding food. Medium size Critter keepers or ventilated plastic shoe box/tubs work well for this purpose.

Substrate

As far as bedding is concerned, while the use of bark, moss and soil may look pleasing to the eye, they can lead to impactions in your gecko and should be avoided. Paper Towels, Newspaper or reptile carpets are a safe bedding that can be easily cleaned and won't lead to impaction or other complications down the line. Avoid using cedar, pine and other wood shavings; hardwood and bark chips, gravel, kitty litter and walnut shells.

Lighting

Although Crested Geckos are nocturnal, that does not necessarily mean they never see the light of day. Recent studies have shown nocturnal reptiles can not only utilize UVB lighting, it can help with overall health. However, make sure your Gecko has plenty of places to hide. Normal circadian rhythms should be established with 12 hour light and 12 hour dark cycles.

Enclosure should be placed in a room where it can be exposed to natural light from nearby windows during the day. **DO NOT PLACE DIRECTLY IN FRONT/NEXT TO A WINDOW UNLESS BLINDS ARE DOWN.** Direct sunlight on a tank can cause temperatures to rise to unsafe levels.

Temperature gradients should be established in the tank. Daytime temperatures should range from 72-78 degrees. Evening temperature should be kept around 70F.

Water

Crested Geckos require high humidity in the range of 70-80%. The tank should be sprayed at least once to twice per day with a dry out period between. Be sure to monitor the cage for fungus with enclosures that are high in humidity.

A water bowl should always be placed in the enclosure. Although most geckos will drink water off the walls and decor in the cage from spraying, many will drink directly from a bowl as well.

A Humidity Box can be added to aid in shedding, and is a must for egg laying females. Vermiculite makes an excellent substrate for humidity boxes that does not dry out right away. These can be misted once daily to once every other day.

Diet

Crested Geckos should have a powdered meal replacer along with crickets. Since they are nectar eaters they require nutrition from fruits. A few available brands include Pangea and Repashy which come in a variety of flavors for crested geckos.

It is recommended to also feed gut loaded, calcium sprinkled crickets once to twice weekly. All insects should be gut loaded (fed fresh veggies and vitamin/minerals) before feeding. Monitor your gecko and adjust feeding amounts as needed (if many insects are left uneaten or your gecko seems to be getting chubby, back off the amount fed). Never leave live prey in the cage for extended periods as insects may attack the gecko.

In addition to gut loading your insects, dust insects with a "calcium only" supplement two to three times a week, and use a reptile vitamin mineral supplement once a week. Make sure the reptile vitamin/mineral supplement contains vitamin D3.

Handling

Crested Geckos are very docile in nature and can be handled with care. They are very jumpy reptiles, often leaping from one hand to the other. They like heights so will often run up or jump towards shoulders or faces. Limit handling of baby and juvenile geckos to avoid unnecessary stress. Unlike other species of Geckos, Crested Geckos are one of the few that do not regrow their tail. Therefore any grabbing of their tail should be avoided. Stressful situations including sudden loud noises, over handling, and poor husbandry can also lead to Cresties dropping their tail.

Common Health Issues

- Dysecdysis (Abnormal/incomplete shedding): This occurs in geckos due to improper husbandry. Often retained shed will be located around the feet and toes, which can cause constriction at those areas and lead to necrosis. To prevent this from happening it is important to be sure there is appropriate humidity and temperature in the gecko's environment. A moist hide box should be provided especially during times of shed to facilitate extra humidity. You may also soak your gecko once daily in shallow, tepid water for 15-20 minutes during shedding.
- Autotomy (Tail dropping): Unlike many other geckos, crested geckos do not regrow their tail once it is lost. If you keep your gecko with another gecko, it is a possibility that a fight between them may result in a dropped tail. Other possibilities include dropping your gecko or other trauma, and putting your gecko in a stressful situation. In the wild they use this as a defense mechanism against predators to try to distract them while they attempt to escape.

- Secondary Nutritional Hyperparathyroidism: This disease process is caused by improper husbandry with some possibilities including lack of calcium or vitamin D3 in the diet, and excess phosphorous in the diet. A majority of reptiles need calcium added to their diet in the form of a Calcium powder (no phosphorous) used to dust the insects a few times weekly. In order to process this calcium, a UVB light source is required for diurnal species. Nocturnal species do not necessarily need a UVB light source, but recent studies show they can benefit from them. When there is an imbalance in the calcium and phosphorous, the body increases the breakdown of calcium stores from the animal's bones in order to maintain appropriate calcium levels. In an animal this can cause significant deformation of the skeleton including bowing of the legs, shortening of the snout, and stunting of growth. The bones become fragile and are prone to fractures. As calcium is needed for many bodily functions, such as muscle contraction, the animal may become weak, lethargic, and anorexic when the body can no longer maintain its calcium levels. This is a process that can typically be remedied with improvement in husbandry and long term calcium supplementation under veterinary supervision. In severe cases, hospitalization may be required to give the animal the best chance at recovery.
- Intestinal parasites: Many of the feeder insects that reptiles carry can harbor intestinal parasites that may be transmitted to your reptile. They can also obtain gastrointestinal parasites by contacting other reptiles. A small number of these parasites may normally inhabit your reptile's gastrointestinal tract without any problems. However with overgrowth of these parasites they can cause a problem. They can cause malabsorption of nutrients, inappetence, lethargy and abnormal stool production. A few of the common parasites encountered include pinworms, coccidia, and flagellated protozoa. A fecal exam is recommended yearly for your reptile to screen for any abnormal amounts of GI parasites.
- Floppy Tail Syndrome: Lack of climbing options in the cage can cause the gecko hanging upside down on the walls of the enclosure, which can lead to Floppy Tail Syndrome. The tail flopping over the back will cause undue stress on the gecko's pelvis and can deform it. This will give your gecko a crooked appearance.