

Chahoua Gecko (*Mniarogekko chahoua*)

Difficulty: Easy

Chahoua geckos are a nocturnal, omnivorous, arboreal lizard native to the islands of Grande Terre and Isle of Pines in New Caledonia. Although they are arboreal, chahoua geckos tend to spend more time in the shaded understory of the forest rather than up in the canopy.

Chahoua geckos are among the larger New Caledonian geckos, reaching 10-12"/25-31cm long. They have a large triangular head, blunt snout, large lidless eyes, vertical pupils, velvety skin, sticky toe pads with claws, and a muscular prehensile tail. Coloring is generally mottled with various shades of green, brown, and pink, with some darker markings, giving the impression of moss or lichen.

Like other New Caledonian geckos, chahoua geckos are fairly easy to care for as far as reptiles go. When appropriate chahoua gecko care is provided, you may expect a lifespan of 15-20 years.

Shopping List

- Front-opening 36"L x 18"W x 36"H terrarium
- 40w Zoo Med Repti Basking Spot
- 5.5" Fluker's Repta-Clamp Lamp with Dimmable Switch
- 18" Zoo Med Reptisun T8 5.0 UVB bulb
- 18" Zoo Med Reptisun T8 Terrarium Hood
- Zilla 24/7 Digital Power Center
- Zoo Med Digital Thermometer/Hygrometer Combo, x2
- Exo Terra Mister
- Zoo Med Eco Earth, 36qt
- Environmental enrichment
 - artificial or (nontoxic) live foliage
 - vines
 - branches
 - cork hollows
 - magnetic ledges
- Pangea Magnetic Gecko Ledge, small
- Pangea Biodegradable Gecko Feeding Cups, small
- Crested gecko meal replacement powder
 - Pangea
 - Repashy
 - Lugarti
 - Zoo Med
- Miner-All Outdoor calcium powder

Housing

Chahoua geckos need an enclosure that is large enough to give them adequate opportunity to explore, hunt, and generally exercise natural behaviors. They are also arboreal, which means that they are a tree-dwelling species, and need a terrarium that provides a generous amount of climbing space. This is why the minimum recommended enclosure size for a single chahoua gecko is 24”L x 24”W x 36”H or equivalent. If possible, larger is always better (particularly wider).

Especially young chahoua geckos (less than 12g) benefit from being kept in a smaller, temporary “grow out” enclosure (around 5 gallons, or roughly 12” x 12” x 12”) until they are large enough to safely navigate a full-sized adult enclosure. For safety reasons, UVB and heat lamps should be omitted from this small grow-out setup.

Can multiple chahoua geckos be housed in the same enclosure?

It’s best not to house multiple chahoua geckos together.

Lighting & UVB

Chahoua geckos are nocturnal, which means that they are primarily active at night. This means that they are likely to prefer cooler temperatures, are exposed to low levels of indirect UVB during the day, and have exceptional night vision.

UVB Lighting

Chahoua geckos are capable of surviving without UVB lighting as long as they get a certain amount of dietary vitamin D3, but they can’t thrive unless it is provided. UVB lighting can be tricky, because in order to get the right strength of UVB (measured by UV Index, or UVI), distance must be considered.

As a rough estimate, to provide appropriate UVB to a chahoua gecko in a 36-48” tall enclosure, you will need one Zoo Med T8 ReptiSun 5.0 in a reflective T8 fixture or an Arcadia ShadeDweller Arboreal UVB kit. Place the basking branch no closer than 6” below the lamp.

(These recommendations are approximations. It is strongly recommended to use a Solarmeter 6.5 to determine the best placement to achieve a UVI of 1.0-2.0 in the basking area at the top of the enclosure.)

Heating

Humans are *warm-blooded*, which means that our body temperature is automatically regulated. Chahoua geckos, however, are *cold-blooded*, and they need to move between areas of different temperatures in order to regulate their body temperature. In the wild, chahoua geckos warm up during the day by sleeping in a warm patch of sunlight. In captivity, sunlight can be replicated with a white incandescent heat lamp.

- **Basking area temperature:** 82-85°F (28-29°C)
- **Cool zone temperature:** 72-75°F (22-24°C)
- **Nighttime temperature:** 65-72°F (18-22°C)

Generally speaking, it doesn't take much to achieve such a low basking temperature. A 40w white incandescent bulb should be plenty, but results will vary based on your room temperature. If you notice that the basking area is too warm, dial down the heat down with a lamp dimmer or switch to a lower wattage bulb. If your basking area is too cool, you will need a higher wattage bulb.

The basking area should be a vine or branch directly under the heat lamp. Because your chahoua gecko is arboreal and will be living in a tall enclosure, the warmest temperatures will be at the top (near the heat lamp), and the coolest temperatures will be toward the bottom. You will need vines, branches, and foliage at all levels to allow for proper thermoregulation.

To track basking temperature, use a digital probe thermometer, with the probe zip-tied to the basking surface under the heat source. Most reptile-brand digital probe thermometers function well.

Humidity

Chahoua geckos do best in a high-humidity environment, with an **average humidity of 60-80%** as measured by a digital probe hygrometer with the probe placed in the middle of the enclosure. Humidity levels that are consistently too high or low can cause health problems for your gecko. However, it is natural for humidity to be lower in the warm area and higher in the cool area. It is also normal and healthy for humidity levels to rise at night and fall during the day.

To raise the humidity in your gecko's enclosure (and provide an extra source of drinking water), use a pump-style pressure sprayer to wet down the enclosure every evening, and again in the morning if needed.

Substrate

Because chahoua geckos are arboreal (tree-dwelling), they don't spend much time on the ground. Although it's not necessary to use bedding for them, it's very useful for helping to stabilize humidity. It also acts as a cushion if they fall from their perch, which does happen occasionally.

It's best to use a moisture-retentive substrate that is similar to the soil in a chahoua gecko's natural habitat. Here are some reliable options:

- DIY tropical mix: 60% organic topsoil, 40% coconut fiber
- Lugarti Natural Reptile Bedding
- Zoo Med Reptisoil
- Zoo Med Eco Earth
- Exo Terra Plantation Soil
- The Bio Dude Terra Fauna bioactive kit

For best results, add a generous layer of leaf litter on top.

Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. Substrate should be completely replaced once every 3-4 months, depending on your needs.

Décor

Decorations play a vital role in your gecko's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your pet's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. And, of course, they make the enclosure look nicer! Without décor, your terrarium is just a glass box with dirt and a feeding ledge. Just because chahoua geckos can climb up glass doesn't mean they shouldn't have other climbing materials available. They also need places to hide that are not on the ground.

Branches, vines, magnetic ledges, cork hollows, and live or artificial foliage work well as décor in a chahoua gecko terrarium. Arrange these items in a way that encourages your gecko to climb and explore, and provides a variety of options for places to sleep during the day.

Food

Chahoua geckos are *omnivores*, which means that they need a balanced diet of both plant- and animal-based foods to get the nutrition that they need. In the wild, they eat mostly fruit and insects. As pets, this diet can be re-created with a balance of 50% meal replacement powder and 50% live insects.

How often chahoua geckos need to eat depends on age:

- **Juveniles (0-12 months)** — CGD daily, insects every other day
- **Adults (>12 months)** — CGD every other day, insects every other day

Crested gecko diet (CGD) must be offered via a wall-mounted feeding ledge, not placed on the group.

Best crested gecko diet powders: Pangea, Repashy, Black Panther Zoological, Gecko Pro, Leapin' Leachie, Zoo Med, Lugarti

Best insects: crickets, dubia roaches, discoid roaches, red head roaches, grasshoppers/locusts

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for your pet is VARIETY. Provide as varied of a diet as you possibly can, and you will be rewarded with a healthier pet that always looks forward to mealtime. I prefer to use a rotation of at least 3 different kinds/flavors of CGD.

Supplements

Crested gecko diet is already fortified and balanced with a variety of vitamins and minerals. However, feeder insects need to be "dusted" with a light coating of calcium powder to balance the calcium-phosphorus ratio.

There are many options, but Arcadia CalciumPro Mg or Miner-All Outdoor are both solid calcium supplements. For best results, use as directed by the label.

Drinking Water

Although your gecko will get drinking water from daily mistings, it's best to always keep a bowl of clean water available on the feeding ledge. This bowl should be scrubbed out with veterinary disinfectant weekly for good hygiene.