

Diplodactylus is represented by 23 terrestrial species that can be found throughout Australia primarily living in dry arid areas. Both color and pattern as well as body structure can be highly varied from species to species. Some are long and slender with narrow tails while others are stocky with fat tails. They would be considered a small to medium-sized gecko, ranging in size from 7cm to 15cm or 2.5 inches to 6 inches. All and all they are an interesting genus with great appeal. By and large, this genus does well in captivity and life expectancy is around 5-8 years.

At The Urban Gecko we are currently working with the following 4 species of Diplodactylus:

#### Helmeted Gecko (*D. galeatus*)

The Helmeted Gecko is a hardy, robust gecko that does very well in captivity. It is a beautiful gecko ranging in color from burnt orange to almost red. Its pattern is made up of irregular blotches that start from behind the head and run through into the tail. This gecko is highly sought after and in fact is one of our favorite species within this genus.

#### Eastern Stone Gecko (*D. vittatus*)

The Eastern Stone Gecko has light brown to dark brown background coloration with a lighter dorsal stripe. This is a stocky gecko with a stout tail. It does particularly well in captivity and makes a great introductory species into this genus and is a must for the hobbyist interested in Australian geckos

#### Box-Patterned Gecko (*D. steindachneri*)

The Box-Patterned Gecko has a slender build and thin tail which it can curl up in. They are so-named because of the light striping that runs from their head to their tail, connected along the way to form small, box-like shapes. Their ground color is varied and ranges from light yellow to reddish brown. These are very pretty geckos and are rare in collections today.

#### Australian Fat-Tailed Gecko (*D. conspicillatus*)

The Australian Fat-Tailed Geckos' background color can be a pale fawn to reddish-brown or dark brown. Its pattern is comprised of fine or coarse reticulations and scattered dark or pale spots. This is a small gecko and is thought to be highly specialized within its habitat because of its elusiveness. It will live in small abandoned spider burrows where it will use its tail as a plug to protect itself from potential invaders. The Australian Fat Tail is a very, very rare gecko within collections today partially because of its love for termites as a primary food item; it can be a challenging captive. Especially prized by the accomplished collector.

Although each species has its own unique characteristics the general captive care of each is very similar.

#### Enclosure

Diplodactylus geckos can be kept in a variety of different types of enclosures. For pet owners your best option for caging is a glass enclosure (aquarium) while the hobbyist/breeder who will be keeping several geckos should look to a rack system. Diplodactylus can be housed either individually or in groups, although two males should never be housed together. In order for your gecko to thrive there are four basic fixtures required within the enclosure, which are heat/light, substrate, furnishings/shelter and humidity/water/minerals.

#### Heat/Light:

We believe it is best for the heat to be provided from below. In the case of a glass enclosure one can use an under tank heater, while the breeder's best option for a rack system is heat cable or heat tape controlled by a thermostat. Because reptiles are cold-blooded and rely on their environment to control body temperature it is important that the heat source remains in the mid 80's and is situated at one end. This will give the gecko the ability to thermo regulate by moving from the heat source to a cooler area of the enclosure ranging in the mid 70's. In other words do not heat the entire enclosure. Diplodactylus geckos should be exposed to light for 10-12 hours per day but because they are nocturnal they do not require a UVB light.

#### Substrate:

We use sand as a substrate for all of our Australian geckos. You should ensure that you do not put too fine of a sand in the enclosure. We include about 1-inch of play sand in the bottom of each enclosure.

#### Furnishings and Shelter:

Diplodactylus geckos are nocturnal so shelters within their enclosure will provide them with a peaceful retreat to sleep or hide in. These can be as elaborate as you like or can be as simple as a plastic container turned upside down with a door cut into it to allow the geckos passage. We recommend putting a shelter on both the warm and cool side of the enclosure so that the gecko can thermo regulate without becoming stressed. We provide a moist hide area in the cool end of the enclosure.

#### Humidity/Water/Minerals

In general Diplodactylus geckos prefer a dry environment and do not need much humidity. Humidity requirements will vary amongst the species. Most Diplodactylus geckos prefer to drink water droplets as opposed to drinking from standing water. We suggest lightly misting the cool end of the enclosure 2-3 times per week with luke warm water.

#### Food

Diplodactylus geckos should be fed a diet of insects, which typically include crickets or other small insects. We prefer to feed our geckos smaller meals, more frequently and typically feed every second day a meal of 3 to 4 crickets. Crickets should be appropriately sized for the gecko and as a general guideline we do not feed crickets that are larger than 1/3 the size of the gecko's head. Insects should be gutloaded with either a commercial gutload product or a mix of either baby cereal, fish flakes or high grade dry dog/cat food as well as leafy greens such as endive, dandelions or romaine lettuce. Gutloading ultimately means that the prey insect is acting as a vehicle to pass on beneficial nutrients to your gecko. Food items should be dusted with calcium powder at every feeding and a supplementary vitamin should be dusted with around once a week. Crickets can be put in the enclosure to roam but should be removed if your gecko does not eat them within a few hours.

#### Note:

*D. conspicillatus* geckos have a natural diet of termites. Converting this species to other food items has shown mixed results. From our experience some will accept other very small insects. For example we have had success offering appropriate sized crickets with their hind legs pinched off

#### Health

Geckos within the Diplodactylus genus usually do well in captivity if they are properly fed, housed and are kept in regularly cleaned enclosure health problems will be unlikely.

#### Handling:

We do not recommend handling these geckos as handling can often be very stressful.

We hope this care sheet has provided you with some useful information and insights into geckos in the Diplodactylus genus. We developed this care sheet based on our experiences of keeping and breeding these geckos. This information has worked for us over the years but we still recommend closely watching your gecko as you may have to make your own adjustments. We are always available to support our clients so please do not hesitate to contact us by phone or e-mail should you have any further questions.

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