Pictus Gecko Care Guide

Paroedura pictus

Provide warm and cool sheltered zones, a humid retreat and varied insect meals. Females can be exhausted by repeated breeding, so routine individual housing is preferable to permanent mixed-sex housing.

Species Profile

Common name: Pictus Gecko

Scientific name: *Paroedura pictus*

Adult size: 4-6 in (10-15 cm) total length

Average lifespan: 5-10 years

Native range: Southern Madagascar

Habitat and activity: Nocturnal/crepuscular; terrestrial shrub, scrub and leaf-litter cover

Diet: Varied small cultured insects

Care difficulty: Intermediate

Shopping List

- Secure enclosure at least 24 × 18 × 18 in (61 × 46 × 46 cm; L × W × H) for one adult; see Housing for exceptions and group arrangements.
- Digital thermometers for different zones; a suitable hygrometer; timer for a consistent day/night cycle.
- Species-appropriate substrate and multiple stable hides or covered retreats.
- Reliable supply of the staple foods described below, clean feeding tools and a transport container.
- Appropriate overhead heat source if required, controlled by a compatible thermostat; infrared thermometer for surfaces.
- Appropriate visible lighting and, where recommended below, a linear UVB fixture with measured shade and exposure zones.
- Fresh-water dish or cup; insect supplements when applicable; a scale appropriate to the animal's size.

Housing

Our recommended starting adult enclosure is 24 × 18 × 18 in (61 × 46 × 46 cm; L × W × H) for one animal. Larger usable space is encouraged. These dimensions are a husbandry recommendation, not a species-specific experimentally proven threshold.

Provide multiple hides across the warm-to-cool and moist-to-drier gradient, covered travel routes and species-appropriate burrowing or low climbing structure. Fix heavy decor to the floor before adding loose substrate so digging cannot undermine it.

Juveniles may use a furnished adult enclosure when food intake, hydration and waste can be monitored. A temporary grow-out enclosure should still offer choice and cover. Quarantine newcomers separately with dedicated tools and a substrate that permits health monitoring; arrange veterinary assessment for unknown-origin animals.

Lighting & UVB

Provide roughly 10-12 hours of visible daylight followed by darkness. A measured UV Index (UVI) around 0.5-1.0 at the most exposed usable site, declining to near zero inside retreats, is our conservative starting recommendation. Low-level UVB is recommended when a usable gradient can be provided; nocturnal activity alone is not a reason to exclude light.

Measure exposure at the animal's back height with an appropriate UVI meter, such as a Solarmeter 6.5. Lamp percentage, wattage and a fixed distance alone do not establish exposure: reflectors, mesh, perch height, plant growth and lamp age change output. Keep glass/plastic out of the UV path, follow fixture safety instructions and provide complete shade. Replace or reassess lamps according to measured output and manufacturer guidance.

Heating & Temperature

- Localized basking surface: 88-92°F (31-33°C).
- Cool-zone air: 72-78°F (22-26°C).
- Nighttime air: 68-74°F (20-23°C) for healthy established animals.

Create the gradient on one side rather than heating every hide to the same temperature. Use a compatible thermostat on each heat source; a manual lamp dimmer does not replace thermostatic protection. Secure the probe and verify temperatures independently: probe thermometers measure air/retreat temperature, while an infrared thermometer measures exposed surfaces.

Use appropriately guarded overhead warmth when needed. Keep animals clear of hot fixtures, avoid heat rocks, and switch visible lights off at night. Night heat is needed only when the room falls below the appropriate range; use a thermostat-controlled lightless source if necessary.

Humidity & Ventilation

45-60% with a localized moist hide. Treat readings as a starting pattern rather than a number to chase regardless of substrate, airflow or animal behavior.

Measure humidity in a representative occupied zone, away from a freshly sprayed surface. Provide sheltered moisture choices while retaining airflow. Persistent condensation, sour odor, flooded soil or surfaces that never dry indicate a setup problem. Ventilation and hydration must be adjusted together rather than simply sealing all vents.

Water & Hydration

Provide a clean, appropriately shallow dish or accessible elevated water cup at all times. Change it daily and immediately when soiled; wash it regularly with dedicated tools. Potable water is generally suitable, with treatment where local water quality requires it.

For animals that drink droplets, mist foliage or suitable surfaces at the time they become active, then allow partial drying. Droplets supplement the dish; water chemistry claims should be based on evidence rather than a species' trade name.

Substrate

Pictus geckos are primarily terrestrial (ground-dwelling), so they don't spend much time on trees or high elevation. Due to this, the substrate is used as a way to allow the gecko to hide or as a cushion in the

event they decide to climb and fall. An easy DIY substrate is a mix of 60% organic top soil, 40% coco coir fiber, and a thin layer of untreated sphagnum moss on top. As a bonus, add a generous layer of clean leaf litter on top to allow them to hide when stressed.

Feces and urates should be removed daily, and contaminated substrate should be scooped out and replaced. The substrate should be completely replaced once every 1-3 months, depending on your needs.

Food & Feeding

Pictus geckos are strict insectivores, which means that they will only consume insects, and should never be fed anything else. Crickets and dubia roaches will be the primary feeder insect for your gecko, with mealworms and small hornworms being an occasional treat. If familiarized with you, Pictus geckos will readily eat off tongs, out of your hand, or in a bowl.

How often Pictus geckos need to eat depends on age:

Juveniles (4-12 months) - 2-3 small crickets 3x/week

Adults (>12 months) - 2-3 medium crickets every other day

Supplements

Lightly dust appropriate insect meals with calcium and use a balanced reptile multivitamin containing suitable vitamin A according to the product’s directions. Gut-loading and variety support nutrition but do not eliminate the need to balance calcium-poor prey.

Match D3 supplementation to the actual UVB exposure and to vitamins already included in other products. UVB does not automatically mean zero dietary D3, and lack of UVB does not justify unlimited D3. Follow one coherent program; do not combine multiple strong vitamin products or coat every feeder heavily.

Decor & Enrichment

Decorations play a vital role in your Pictus gecko's enclosure as environmental enrichment. Enrichment items encourage exercise, stimulate your pet's natural instincts, and help promote overall wellbeing. Good decor can include but is not limited to: Flat hides, vines, branches, bamboo shoots, artificial leaves, small log hides, etc.

Can multiple Pictus geckos be housed in the same enclosure?

Pictus geckos certainly can and have been kept together in colonies of females only! If housing more than two geckos together, it is recommended to increase the enclosure to a 20 gallon long or larger if adding more.

Males should never be housed together!

Handling & Behavior

Let the animal settle and feed consistently before brief optional handling. Support the body, work low over a safe surface and stop when repeated retreat, escape attempts or defensive behavior show stress. Never lift a lizard by its tail.

Avoid handling immediately after meals, during difficult sheds or when unwell. Wash hands and use dedicated equipment to reduce disease transfer.

Cleaning & Routine Maintenance

Daily: check the animal's access to water/appropriate moisture, temperatures, visible condition and equipment. Remove feces, contaminated material, dead feeders and spoiled food promptly.

Regularly: clean dishes and feeding surfaces, check thermostats and probes, inspect decor stability and maintain ventilation. Bioactive systems still require waste checks, food removal, plant care and drainage maintenance; they are not self-cleaning.

Record appetite, activity, shed history and weight or body condition when safe. Arrange veterinary assessment for unexplained changes. Quarantine new animals with dedicated tools, and disinfect only with a suitable product used at the label dilution/contact time, then rinse and dry as required before return.

Cohabitation

Individual housing is the safest routine default. Shared housing can cause food competition, injury or reproductive pressure even without obvious fighting. Never assume a male/female pair or female group is compatible. Breeding introductions belong in a planned specialist program with separate backup enclosures and individual monitoring.

Shedding & Seasonal Changes

Maintain access to a clean humid retreat and inspect toes, tail tip and eyes after shedding when observation is possible. Do not peel retained skin or apply oils/adhesives. Persistent constriction, damaged tissue or repeated failed sheds warrants veterinary help.

Seasonal changes in appetite or activity can occur. Check temperatures, hydration and weight before treating prolonged refusal as normal. Deliberate brumation or breeding cycles require healthy animals and species-specific preparation; pet care does not require forcing a seasonal shutdown.

Reproduction

Repeated egg production can exhaust females, particularly when continuously housed with males. Provide a suitable moist laying retreat for mature females, monitor weight and calcium nutrition, and obtain veterinary help for suspected egg retention. Breeding requires preparation rather than simply placing two geckos together.

Common Health Concerns

- Poor body condition or feeding decline: check the full gradient, hydration and food quality; arrange assessment for persistent refusal accompanied by weight loss.
- Calcium/vitamin imbalance: weakness, tremors, a soft or misshapen jaw or abnormal limbs require veterinary assessment; extra high-dose supplements are not a substitute for diagnosis.
- Skin, shed or injury problems: repeated retained skin, wounds, swelling or abnormal discoloration deserve prompt attention.

- Respiratory or systemic illness: labored/open-mouth breathing at rest, marked lethargy, loss of balance, persistent diarrhea or rapid deterioration require an experienced exotic veterinarian.