

# Tokay Geckos

Tokay geckos aren't as commonly seen as pets as leopard geckos, but they are just as interesting as their cousins. They are the second-largest kind of gecko and are known for their vibrant colors and spots. They are usually a blue-gray color with bright orange and blue spots.

Tokay geckos are vocal, making a unique croaking or barking noise to attract mates, are arboreal, and according to some myths, are said to bring good luck.

Kept as pets in homes around the world, many Asian cultures also consider tokay geckos to be good luck charms. These lizards are unfortunately frequent targets of poachers in the wild since tokay geckos are used in some medicinal remedies.

**Names:** Tokay gecko, Gekko gecko, hokkeng, takshak, hankkok, and awke.

**Lifespan:** Average 10 years; 20 years has been recorded.

**Size:** Up to 20 inches long, between 150 and 400 grams.

## Tokay Gecko Behavior and Temperament

Tokay geckos are nocturnal and have a bit of a reputation for biting. They are pretty feisty and can deliver a painful bite, so care is warranted. With regular interaction, they usually become less aggressive but generally will not be good for handling.

Their name arises from the call they make; which sounds like "To-kay! To-kay!" Never house male tokay geckos together, and don't house your gecko in your bedroom; their barking may wake you up in the middle of

the night. Tokay geckos are also able to detach their tails to escape a predator.

Tokay geckos in the wild are known to be highly territorial, and males will attack other tokays or any creature perceived as a threat. These critters are excellent climbers and have relatively big heads compared to other geckos. They have strong jaws and prehensile tails.

During the day, your tokay gecko will sleep in a head-down position, but don't be fooled into thinking it's inactive. At night, tokay geckos get moving.

This is not a pet for the novice herpetologist; these geckos are clever and will bite or strike out when they feel threatened. Tokay geckos are particularly poor choices for homes with young children due to their propensity for biting.

Don't expect a cuddly pet if you choose a tokay gecko. They're pretty to look at, but even those that have been in captivity for many years can become aggressive when provoked.

## **Housing the Tokay Gecko**

Since these are the largest of the geckos, a 20-gallon high tank is the minimum size recommended. Provide sturdy branches for climbing, and add strong potted plants if desired (artificial plants could also be used). Also provide some hiding spots using cork bark, half logs, or caves. Your gecko should spend almost all its time climbing.

Be sure your tank has a secure lid; tokay geckos are strong and may attempt to escape if the opportunity presents itself. You don't want a scared tokay gecko wandering around your house, for its sake and yours.

## **Heat**

Aim for 80 to 90 F (27 to 32 C) during the day (as a gradient) and down to 70 to 80 F (21 to 27 C) at night. No UVB-emitting bulbs are necessary since they are a nocturnal species. An incandescent bulb can be used for heat during the day, but a nocturnal reptile bulb or ceramic element must be used for heat at night.

Heat provided from above the tank is preferable over a heating pad since tokay geckos tend to climb. Humidity should be kept at about 70 percent by misting, but don't let it drop under 50 percent. The proper substrate helps retain humidity.

## **Substrate**

Orchid bark- or coconut husk-based substrate are good choices for their moisture-retaining qualities. When the gecko is shedding, you may even use paper towels, which helps with clean up. Try to use paper towels that have not been bleached or that have ink designs on them.

## **Food and Water**

Tokay geckos are usually voracious eaters and can be fed a variety of insect prey (crickets, superworms, mealworms, waxworms, grasshoppers, cockroaches, etc.). Larger tokays may take pinky mice. Prey should be gut loaded prior to feeding and dusted with a vitamin supplement containing calcium. Juveniles can be fed daily; adults every other day or so.

## **Common Health Problems**

Like many lizard species, geckos are susceptible to mouth rot, or

stomatitis. Symptoms include a reddish appearance around the mouth or a cheesy-looking ooze. Excess saliva may indicate a respiratory infection.

They're also prone to parasitic infections, on the skin as well as internally. A skin infection may look like a rash. If your gecko is having difficulty shedding completely, this is another symptom of a skin problem.

Internal parasites can cause sluggishness, changes in appetite, and unusual fecal deposits.

All of these conditions are treatable if caught early. Consult a veterinarian who specializes in reptiles. Don't attempt to treat these ailments with home remedies or, worse, by ignoring them.