



Henkel's Leaf-Tailed Geckos

Uroplatus henkeli

ADVANCED · 8–10 IN ADULT · 10–15 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · ARBOREAL · MADAGASCAR

A gecko built to disappear. Henkel's is one of the big leaf-tailed geckos of Madagascar's rainforests, a nocturnal hunter that spends daylight pressed flat and head-down against bark, its fringed skin erasing its own outline. The honest headline: this is an advanced animal. The genus is CITES-listed, it overheats far more easily than it chills, and it has no interest in being handled.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Advanced
Ambient temp	72–78 °F day, 65–70 °F night
Basking spot	80–84 °F
Humidity	70–90%
UVB	Low output, beneficial
Diet	Crickets, roaches, snails
Feeding	Every 2–3 days
Adult size	8–10 inches
Lifespan	10–15 years



Captive-bred Henkel's turn up on specialist tables at NARBC shows. Every one carries the fringed skin and the wide, flat tail.

Photo: Nick Block / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

A Gecko That Wants To Be Left Alone

Henkel's is a look-at animal. Handling stresses them, a stressed *Uroplatus* jumps, and a jumping gecko can drop its tail; the regrown one never looks the same. Do the work with a spray bottle and your eyes. *Uroplatus* is listed on CITES Appendix II, so buy captive-bred from a keeper who can produce paperwork, and check your state and import rules before money changes hands. Wild-caught imports usually arrive dehydrated and carrying parasites.

02

Housing: Height Over Floor Space

Everything about this gecko is vertical. Adults need at least 24×18×36 and do better at 36×18×36, furnished with wide cork slabs and bamboo they can hang on head-down. Racks are wrong at every stage. House one gecko per enclosure: males will fight, and even a mixed pair turns into a slow stress problem you won't see until an animal is thin.

Cross-ventilation matters as much as volume; stagnant wet air is how respiratory trouble starts.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Hatchling	8×8×12	12×12×18	Sturdier than <i>U. phantasticus</i> hatchlings, but still delicate. Go vertical.
Juvenile	12×12×18	18×18×24	Cool nights are critical. Wide cork slabs to press flat against by day.
Subadult	18×18×24	24×18×36	Growth is slower than most geckos. Don't push it with heat or food.
Adult	24×18×36	36×18×36	Cool 65–75 °F, humid 70–85%, heavily planted. Bioactive strongly advised.

Enclosure sizes in inches (W×D×H) from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Every stage wants height over floor space, and no stage belongs in a rack.

03

Heat, Light and the Night Drop

Keep ambient at 72–78 °F with a single warm spot at 80–84 °F they can ignore, then let the room fall to 65–70 °F overnight. That night drop isn't optional; it's the rhythm the whole genus runs on. **A Uroplatus cannot escape a hot enclosure, and heat kills them faster than cold ever will.** Low-output UVB is beneficial over a tall, planted cage, mounted so the gecko can choose shade. No heat rocks, ever.

04

Humidity, Misting and Drinking

Target 70–90% and let it swing. Mist heavily in the evening, then allow a real dry-down before the next one: air that never dries is worse than air that dries out briefly. Henkel's drink droplets off leaves and glass and mostly ignore a standing bowl, so your misting schedule is the water supply. A drainage layer under the substrate and cross-ventilated sides let you run the cage wet without souring it.

05

Substrate, Plants and Perches

Go bioactive. A deep organic mix with leaf litter, springtails and isopods handles waste, holds moisture and gives the cage the buffered feel these geckos evolved in. Then fill the vertical space: wide cork flats, angled bamboo, and enough live foliage that you sometimes cannot find the animal. A gecko you can always see is a gecko with nowhere to hide. Skip loose sand and anything dusty; it belongs in a different biome entirely.

06

Feeding After Dark

Crickets, roaches and snails, offered every 2–3 days, and offered at night when the gecko is actually awake. Feed after lights out and you will see hunting; feed at noon and you will see food die in the leaf litter. Dust with calcium and a multivitamin on a schedule you write down. Snails are worth the trouble as a calcium source, but buy them farmed rather than collecting them from the yard. Match prey to head width, and pull anything uneaten by morning.

07

Health Red Flags

Dehydration is the one that catches keepers: sunken eyes, skin that stays wrinkled or tents when it should be smooth, and stuck shed clinging to toes and over the eyes. Watch the pelvis and tail base for wasting, and watch where the gecko sits. Pressed flat on its slab is normal; sitting on the glass or the floor, or moving around in daylight, usually means the cage is too hot. Open-mouth breathing or mucus means a reptile vet now, not next week.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.