

Where to get a Leo and what to keep in mind

Okay before i tell you where you can get your leo first some questions you should answer for yourself:

Do i have enough space? In long term you need atleast a 3ft long enclosure. The space you have also helps you determine how many leos you can get.

Did i do enough research and am sure you i provide good husbandry?

Can i afford the feeders, energy, enclosure and decorations as well as possible vet bills for the next 20 years?

Is there an exotic vet close to me?

Is my landlord/roommate/partner etc. okay with the leos and feeders?

Do i have room for the feeders?

Is there a pet shop/hardware store where i can buy bulbs, feeders etc. in case anything breaks or if i need anything fast?

You have too keep in mind that you`ll might have that pet for the next 15-20+ years. There is a huge responsibility coming with a leo. Also keeping leos is often kind of addicting and many will get a second one soon after. You should only consider getting one if you plan to care for it for many years.

Okay so you want a leo and answered teh questions above. But where do you get one?

Where to get a leo is a thing of personal preference.

Most common are breeders, reptile expos, pet shops and re-homing/rescues. All these options have Pros and Cons.

Breeders: you Know the genetics of the leo and could use them for breeding, you often have the option to ask questions if you need help, If it a local breeder you can have a look how s/he keeps the animals. Depending on that you can decide if you want to buy off of him/her or not. You can choose a certain morph if you want too.

You might end up with a scammer or a breeder that wants mostly your cash and the animals might be kept bad. So to make sure you get a reliable breeder ist good to listen to recommendations. Also the breeder should check for fecals once a year. So s/he should definilty be able to show you the last results.

Expo: You have a lot to choose from and a huge variety when it comes to morphes. Also you can talk to the breeder, get tips and tricks and can see the leo in real life before getting it. Often you can choose a leo before and then just meet the breeder at the Expo. Imo that`s the best option as you already picked out a hopefully reliable breeder and won´t be fooled by a scammer.

If you buy at an expo the breeder should be able to tell you the scientific name, if it's wild caught or captive bred, the natural habitat, size when adult, sex, weight, feeders, general husbandry and also the name and address of the breeder. Also make sure to ask questions. Like the exact morph and not just „albino“: If the breeder can't answer that there is most likely something wrong.

You might buy a sick animal without knowing. At Expos some people try to sell sick leos or way too young leos. If a leo is way too cheap you can be sure that there is something wrong with it or the breeder. May also again be a breeder who is breeding under terrible conditions just to make money. You might also get into an impulse buy. If that's the case at least go to a breeder that you know is reliable so you get a nice healthy leo.

Pet shop: You get the leos quite cheap and can look at them beforehand

The leos are often kept horribly and also often are sick. Parasites including crypto isn't too rare. Also pet shops are like the main source of misinformation. So don't let the employees tell you bs. There are a few exemptions but in my opinion buying from a big chain store is a huge No.

Rescue: you can give a poor leo a second (sometimes even third...) chance. The feeling of getting a poor leo back to health is amazing! Also there are a lot of leos already on the market and more and more start breeding. So why not adopt a little dino that might've had a bad past. Also you can support your local reptile rescue.

You often can not really choose the morph, age and sex. You don't know exactly what the leo actually has so huge vet bills are possible. Also it's a lot more work and only for experienced keepers. Newbie should get used to a healthy leo before trying to rescue a really sick one. Next thing is that if you already have reptiles there is a risk that the rescue has something contagious which could spread.

There are some factors you should keep in mind when deciding which leo you want.

Healthy leo:

- is moving around and hunting food on its own
- is at a good body weight. Not too skinny but also not too fat
- no stuck shed
- healthy looking body and now bendy looking legs (signs of MBD)
- no cloudy eyes and a wet, pink inside of the mouth. Also watch out for signs of mouth rot

Sick leo:

- leo not moving/ not reacting when touched, lethargic

- very skinny body/tail (either underfed or parasites)
- stuck shed
- not eating for a long period of time (outside of brumation)
- bend bones (MBD or broken bones)
- cloudy eyes/wounds at the mouth
- red/black dots all over the skin (mites)
- diarrhea
- cloaca is infected or dirty
- wounds on the body

And as a summary the steps when getting a leo:

- 1) Research. A lot of research
- 2) Decide where you want to get it. Maybe already contact a breeder and get a reservation for a leo you like
- 3) Buy quarantine material and make sure everything is set up
- 4) Now you can actually pick up the leo or let it be shipped to you
- 5) Put the leo in quarantine
- 6) Build the final enclosure. You could do it sooner but as quarantine lasts 3 months you have plenty of time to do it now
- 7) After quarantine you can put the leo in the final enclosure

Main Sources used:

„Leopardgecko“ by Karsten Gießhammer and Gunther Köhler

<https://www.der-leopardgecko.de/>