

# **Enclosure**

Here the goal is to mimik their natural habitat as much as possible. So how do we do that?

## **Size:**

The enclosure should be atleast 90cm x 50cm x 50cm big. But personally i would recommend 120cm x 60cm x 60cm. In this size it's actually easier to achieve the temperature zones. If it's too small it can be hard to achieve a hotspot and still provide a proper cold side.

You can't really go too big though. The key is to provide enough coverage. A bare enclosure can lead to the leo only sitting in one hide.

## **Place:**

The enclosure shouldn't be right in front of a window (especially when the sun shines in regulary) cause the enclosure can easily overheat there. Some also place the enclosure next to windows to provide UV. This however won't work out as UV-Light can't go through glass so no UV-Light will actually get into the enclosure.

Also the enclosure should be place it a rather quiet room and not in a place where much stuff is happening as it might disturb the leos.

Don't place the enclosure on the ground. This could cause draughts of air which isn't great for leos.

## **Material:**

The most commonly used enclosures are:

Glass: okay to use for leos. Easy to clean and desinfect. Downsides are that glass isn't holding heat very great and sometimes ventilation can be an issue. Also if you leave all sides open it might look nice but the leo might be more shy as they don't appreciate open space. If you put in a nice backdrop it can work out great for a leo.

(Note for exoterras: In general the large ones are great for a leo. However the backdrop isn't really suitable for reptiles with claws (like leos) as climbing can be hard. A backdrop with ledges would be more suitable. Those can be easily build at home:

Wood: Great for Leos. Holds heat amazing and is also front opening. This will make the leo feel more secure when working in the enclosure. Also as 3 sides are not see-through the leo again feels more secure. Also ventilation is good in most of the wooden enclosures.

Glass Tanks: Many use it but in my opinion it's the worst option availabe. Not only is the ventilation basically non existent and therefore no air-circulation anywhere but you also have 4 open sides (which will make the leo shiy) and have to put your hands in from the top. In nature predators often also come from the top and therefore leos will get even more shy in tanks.

If you can go for a front opening enclosure.

Plastic tubs/racks Oh please no. Racks are basically always too small and heated with the wrong heatsource. Also most racks i've seen had close to no enrichment and were rather depressing. In a small rack with plastic tubs it's basically impossible to provide the proper advanced husbandry your leo deserves.

Substrate: As this is a group for advanced husbandry i'll mostly go for the natural substrate. What all choices have in common is clay.

Clay makes the substrate a bit more hard and more diggable. Plain sand for example isn't as good for digging as sand and clay.

In general you want to mimic the natural environment as good as possible.

Good choices are:

- a mix of clay/sand

- a mix of organic top soil/Sand/clay

- bioactive mix. If too loose: add clay powder. Here there is also a clean up crew which will clean any poop etc. in the enclosure.

Many also use tiles or paper towels/ shelf liner etc. Those aren't ideal because digging is impossible for the leos. But it's a natural behaviour which should be possible.

They also don't hold heat very well and especially paper towels and shelf liner honestly just don't look great.

Calciumsand is also an absolute No-Go. Leos will eat it and then get impacted due to the sand forming clumps in the body. Calcium sand should be illegal.

### Essentials in the enclosure:

- Humid Hide. Important part of the enclosure and should be available at all times. You can easily make them yourself by using a small plastic box (for example from ice cream) and just cut a hole in the lid (make sure to smooth out the edges to prevent injuries) and just add a substrate that you then keep moist all the time. Good choices are Eco earth or moss (i prefer eco earth). If possible provide humid hides in different temperature zones.

- Dry Hide. Obviously the leos doesn't only need a humid but also dry hides. The hides should be placed in different temperature zones so the leo can properly control body heat and also choose whether to be covered or laying open. Basically anything can be a dry hide. Coconut, Bark, self made hides, bought hides, Stones etc.

- water dish. Water should be available at any time

- calcium dish. Calcium also should be available at any time. The leo will go and lick it when it feels like it needs some.

-Thermostat. Every heat source should be controlled by a thermostat to prevent overheating. For lights you need a dimming thermostat.

-Thermometer. Doesn't necessarily have to be inside the tank but you should definitely own one to check the temps regularly (i recommend infra red ones)

Decorations: The more the better! You can't put too much decorations in. Leos love coverage and the more clutter you have laying around the more active the leo will be.

And basically everything can be used here. Stones. Sticks, Bark, Plastic hides, tiles stacked on each other, Plants etc.

You can also use stuff you find in nature. Just make sure to not get any ants etc. In your tank.

### Backdrop

I highly recommend a backdrop with ledges or several levels. Not only does this provide coverage but also a lot more space the leo can use and also a climbing possibility. And especially in glass tanks backdrops are an amazing choice to make cause it'll close one or more sides which will make the leo feel more secure.

Main Sources used:

„Leopardgecko“ by Karsten Griefshammer and Gunther Kohler

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