herpy

GECKOS

Helmethead gecko

Tarentola chazaliae

A small, compact gecko from the Atlantic coast of north-western Africa with long, pointed bumps at the back of the head that look like a helmet. It is nocturnal, fearless and greedy, chirps and grunts when it is on the go, and lives in dry terrain with damp fog from the sea. It therefore needs a dry enclosure with humid hides and daily misting.

Family: Phyllodactylidae Former name: *Geckonia chazaliae*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**5-10 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**8-12 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Desert**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**50 × 30 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**40-60%**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or one male with several females**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**2 eggs**
Incubation	**70-110 days** at 27-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Two adult animals need an enclosure of at least 50 × 30 × 30 cm (length × width × height). Three animals need more floor area, and more space gives more activity, because the animals explore diligently.
TEMPERATURE	By day the temperature should be 24-29 °C, from 24-27 °C at the cool end to about 29 °C at the warm end, with a basking spot of 32-35 °C. Use a heat mat under the floor at one end or a small spotlight, always with a thermostat.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	The species differs from most desert geckos in needing moisture, and moisture is the key to success. Humidity should be 40-60 %, and the enclosure is lightly misted once or twice a day.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The gecko is nocturnal and requires no special lighting. The light can be anything from a spot bulb with UV or a daylight tube to ordinary daylight from the room.
FEEDING	The gecko is an eager and greedy hunter, which eats surprisingly much for its size. The staple diet is dubia roaches or crickets, and small mealworms and waxworms can be given for variety.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The gecko is hardly afraid of people at all. Many animals quickly learn that you mean food, and come to the glass or take insects from tweezers or fingers. Even newly hatched young take food from a finger.
NATIVE RANGE	Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania and Senegal.