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GECKOS

Elegant gecko

Stenodactylus sthenodactylus

A small, nocturnal desert gecko from North Africa and the Middle East with sand-coloured, almost transparent skin and large eyes. It buries itself in the sand by day, chirps softly at night and lives on small insects. It is a species to watch, not to pick up.

Family: Gekkonidae Former name: *Ascalabotes sthenodactylus; Stenodactylus elegans; Stenodactylus guttatus* Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**7-10 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**6-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 30 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 4 adults
Temperature, day	**24-29 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**19-24 °C**
Humidity	**20-40%**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or one male with several females**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-2 eggs**
Incubation	**60-80 days** at 27-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
An enclosure of 60 × 30 × 30 cm (length × width × height) holds up to four adults, one male and three females, while 45 × 30 × 30 cm is enough for one animal or a pair.

TEMPERATURE
By day the enclosure should be 24-29 °C with a warm area at one end of 32-35 °C, measured on the sand, so the animal can choose for itself between warm and cool places.

HUMIDITY AND WATER
As a desert animal the species must be kept dry, with about 20-40% humidity and dry sand. Over 40-50% for any length of time is too much.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species is nocturnal and needs no special lighting when the insects are dusted with calcium and vitamin D3.

FEEDING
The gecko is an insectivore. Use small crickets as the staple diet, and alternate with small dubia roaches, micro mealworms and flightless fruit flies. Waxworms are fatty and are given only as an occasional treat.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
The gecko is fast and shy and should not be picked up, because the thin skin tears easily. If you need to move an animal, let it run into a cupped hand or into a small box, and close it in so it does not jump.

NATIVE RANGE
Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Mali, Israel, Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia.