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House and Mediterranean Geckos (*Hemidactylus* sp.)

Common and Widespread Stowaways

House and Mediterranean geckos belong to a widely cosmopolitan genus of geckos with about 90 to 100 described species found in many tropical to sub-tropical areas of the world, where they often live in close proximity to humans. These geckos are a nocturnal species with large, lidless eyes, distinct toe pads, and a widely variable ground color from light to dark brown, yellowish, tan, whitish, to pinkish with or without faint bands or stripes. The skin and small, granular scales of most species also has tubercles as well. As with many other geckos, house and Mediterranean geckos lack eyelids, and use their thick, fleshy tongues to clean their eyes and pupils. Also as with many gecko species, these geckos possess enlarged toe pads consisting of several rows of lamellae covered in millions of microscopic hairs known as setae. These setae enable the gecko to cling to, adhere, and climb a wide variety of surfaces with ease. Also as with many other gecko species, is the fact that they can vocalize by creating clicking or squeaking sounds when threatened, defensive, or to display territory and social structure. House and Mediterranean geckos are a hardy, extremely prolific, and easily maintained genera of geckos for the beginning herp enthusiast.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Suborder: Lacertilia

Infraorder: Gekkota

Family: Gekkonidae

Genus: *Hemidactylus*

Species: *Hemidactylus* sp.*

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, house and Mediterranean geckos can attain longevity of 5 to 6 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

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House and Mediterranean geckos are indigenous to southern to Southeast Asia and the Mediterranean in nearly all types of habitats including human habitations. They are also a truly cosmopolitan genus, being found or introduced in many other areas of the world as well, including the United States.

Conservation Status

Conservation status is dependent upon the species. Some are IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT), Critically Endangered (CE), or Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

House and Mediterranean geckos are fairly small geckos which range from 3 to 6 inches as adults.

Housing and Enclosure

Housing must be sealed and escape proof, and the size of the enclosure recommended will depend on the age and size of the gecko. For hatchlings up to 6 months or so, a 5 gallon tall aquarium, terrarium, or similar enclosure is recommended. Once a gecko reaches or exceeds six months or so, a 10 to 20 gallon tall terrarium or enclosure should be used. House and Mediterranean geckos are arboreal, and height is more important than floor space. Provide plenty of live or artificial plants, branches, cork bark, or other furnishings for ample climbing and hiding opportunities. Substrates that retain and hold humidity well are recommended, and naturalistic substrates can include sphagnum moss and fir shavings, natural moss, or similar substrates. To maintain humidity and hydration, daily or regular misting is necessary. They will drink the condensation from the enclosure's furnishings and walls, and a small water dish can also be provided, and must be kept clean, but will usually be seldom used.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Ideal temperatures for house and Mediterranean geckos range from 80 to 85 degrees F ambient temperature and an 85 to 90 degree F basking spot. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop to between 70 to 75 degrees F. These geckos have fairly simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it in moderated amounts can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). Provide a daily photoperiod or light cycle of at least 10 to 12 hours. Spot clean the enclosure for urates, feces, or uneaten food at least twice per week. Be sure to periodically replace the substrate, clean, and disinfect the enclosure and its furnishings at minimum every 2 to 3 months. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; In the wild, these geckos are insectivorous, and will eat a large array of insects and other small invertebrates. In captivity, feed these geckos a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. House and

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Mediterranean geckos also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

House and Mediterranean geckos tend to be delicate, fast moving, and skittish species of geckos. Therefore, handling should be limited to periods whenever necessary. As with some other species of geckos, they may chip or vocalize in response to being handled or when threatened. Handle any of these geckos gently and deliberately but do not drop or injure the animal. As with many geckos and other lizards, they can also drop their tails when frightened or handled roughly. Take care to not grab your gecko by its tail or it may detach if your gecko perceives you as a predator or a threat.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers.

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