

Care Sheet:

'Common geckos'



Woodworthia spp.

Adult Size: Up to 89mm SVL.

Threat status: Range from "Threatened – Nationally critical" to "Not Threatened".

Lifespan: over 50 years.

Habitat: coastal forest, flaxland, deep rock piles, boulder beaches, rock crevices, tree hollows, under loose bark, logs, coastal to alpine.

Permit Level: General authorisation.

Enclosure:

Minimum recommended enclosure size = 50x50x100cm (LxWxH).

Ideal Group Size:

2:3-4 (M:F).

Compatible Species:

Green geckos, Small diurnal skinks, Copper, Ornate and Whitaker's skinks.

Recommended Cage Furnishing:

'Common geckos' are easy to keep and may be housed in small colonies (however try your best to ascertain which species you may have to avoid keeping different species together). In the wild these geckos show a preference for rock crevices, tree hollows or dense vegetation such as flax and *Muehlenbeckia*. Consequently, an enclosure that offers complex vegetation structure (lots of branches and foliage) and numerous refuge sites (hiding places) is crucial. Refuges that have proved most popular with these species in captivity include stacks of timber boards or Onduline with spacers (just wide enough for a gecko to squeeze in), stacks of flat rocks with spaces for the geckos to live in, and hollow bamboo or polythene pipe (with one end blocked off). Always make sure that fresh water is available, and if using water dishes remember to clean them regularly to prevent algae and bacteria from growing.

Breeding:

Depending on the species, mating may occur in April – May, with young (usually twins) born in February – May the following year. Problems with breeding may be partially explained by housing different species together, however this is not always the case and species will hybridise! So, make sure you know what species you hold, or consult an expert for advice. Neonates should be separated to minimise any issues

related to food competition with the adults. Fruit / vinegar flies, small moths (pencil or grass moths), small house flies, and juvenile crickets make excellent food for babies.

Diet:

Woodworthia spp. are nocturnal geckos. So, providing nocturnally active invertebrates, such as moths, spiders, beetles, crickets and small cockroaches will give your lizards the opportunity to hunt naturally. They will also happily stalk unsuspecting flies resting on the branches and foliage at night. In the wild, some species of *Woodworthia* swarm over flowering plants to consume nectar and frequently lick honeydew produced by scale insects, so providing seasonal Pohutukawa and flax flowers will allow your captive geckos to carry out their natural instincts.

Notes:

- There are approximately 11 known species of *Woodworthia* (excluding Goldstripe geckos) distributed across New Zealand, from Northland to Southland, and even Stewart Island. Most species have not yet been formally described, but all are quite distinct from each other (genetically and morphologically). For those that keep *Woodworthia* species, it is worth attempting to track down their geographic origin to give you an indication of which species you may have. This may be a somewhat difficult task, but could help you to keep your stock 'pure', and avoid further hybridisation between species.
- Their habitat varies considerably, with North Island species generally existing below the treeline in forested, open scrubland and rocky coastal areas including beach / duneland habitats. In the South Island, species are known to exist across the full extent of habitats, from alpine environments through to rocky screes, grasslands, lowland rock outcrops and coastal boulder beaches. In these areas *Woodworthia* spp. geckos are frequently found in communal colonies sharing a retreat.
- *Woodworthia* species are largely nocturnal, becoming active after dusk. They can be very shy and timid; often disappearing quickly into a refuge when the enclosure is approached. Using a dim light, or even better, a torch covered with red cellophane will help you get close and observe them behaving more naturally. If you decide to establish a small colony (e.g., 3-5 animals), make sure you check your animals regularly to make sure they are all maintaining good health (appropriate weights, growth and body condition) and are not aggressive towards each other. Signs of aggression may include bite scars on the tail, dropped tails, and / or missing toes. If you sense an animal is being picked on, remove them from the colony to recover. Some *Woodworthia* spp. are known to be highly vocal and will spend hours calling from the entrance of their rocky crevice in the evenings. Whether these squeaks and chirps serve to act as communication with other individuals or as territorial calls still remains unclear.