## **YVCipedia REPTILE**

Tokay Gecko Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

The **Tokay Gecko (*Gekko gecko*)** is a **large, strikingly colored, nocturnal gecko** native to Southeast Asia. They’re well known for their **vivid blue-gray base with bright orange or red spots**, large eyes with vertical pupils, and powerful jaws.

These geckos are **very vocal**, with their loud, repeated “to-kay” call. While visually spectacular, they are also **known for defensive, strong bites and a territorial nature**, making them best suited for **experienced keepers**.

Tokay geckos can grow **10–14 inches long** (including tail) and live **10–20 years** in captivity with proper care.

## **Housing & Environment**

Tokay geckos are **arboreal climbers** that need **tall, secure enclosures** designed to mimic their natural vertical habitat.

**Minimum enclosure size:**

* Single adult: **18×18×24 inches** (tall-style terrarium recommended)
* Larger is better for enrichment and multiple hides

**Key enclosure features:**

* Escape-proof doors or lids (they are strong, determined, and fast!)
* Multiple vertical and horizontal branches for climbing
* Cork bark tubes, bamboo, and artificial or live plants for hiding and cover
* Secure hides at different heights

**Recommended substrates:**

* Coconut husk fiber or cypress mulch for humidity retention
* Bioactive substrates for naturalistic setups
* Paper towels for simple, clinical setups (especially for quarantine)

**Cleaning guidelines:**

* Spot-clean feces daily or as needed
* Replace substrate fully and disinfect enclosure monthly or as required

## **Heating & Lighting**

Tokay geckos require **warm, tropical conditions** with a safe **temperature gradient** to regulate metabolism.

**Temperature gradient:**

* **Warm side / basking area:** 85–90°F
* **Cool side:** 75–80°F
* **Nighttime:** Safe to drop to ~70–75°F

**Heating:**

* Overhead ceramic heat emitters or low-wattage halogen bulbs
* Under-tank heat mats (side-mounted if used, always thermostat-controlled)
* Avoid heat rocks (burn risk)

**Lighting:**

* Tokay geckos are **nocturnal** and do not require high-intensity UVB
* **Low-level UVB (2–5%) is optional but beneficial** for calcium metabolism
* Provide a **12-hour light/dark cycle** with timers

## **Humidity**

Tokay geckos thrive in **high humidity** environments ranging **60–80%**.

**Humidity management tips:**

* Mist the enclosure once or twice daily to maintain humidity
* Provide live plants to help hold moisture
* Use hygrometers for accurate monitoring
* Ensure good ventilation to prevent mold and bacterial growth

Proper humidity is essential for **healthy shedding and respiratory health**.

## **Water & Hydration**

Tokay geckos typically **drink water droplets** from leaves and enclosure walls after misting.

**Water guidelines:**

* Mist daily to provide drinking opportunities
* Include a small water dish, even if rarely used
* Change water daily to prevent bacterial growth
* Clean and disinfect water dishes weekly

## **Diet & Feeding**

Tokay geckos are **insectivorous predators** that need a **varied, high-protein diet**.

**Feeding guidelines:**

* Juveniles: Feed **daily**
* Adults: Feed **every 2–3 days**

**Appropriate prey items:**

* Crickets
* Dubia roaches
* Black soldier fly larvae
* Occasional waxworms, superworms (treat only)

**Feeding tips:**

* Always gut-load insects before feeding
* Dust prey with **calcium (with D3) 2–3× weekly**
* Dust with a **multivitamin 1× weekly**
* Use feeding tongs to reduce stress and risk of accidental bites

## **Behavior & Handling**

Tokay geckos are **notorious for being defensive**. They will often **bark, gape, and bite** when threatened.

**Handling recommendations:**

* Best treated as **display animals**—minimal handling is ideal
* If handling is necessary, use **gentle, slow movements**
* Use a **soft catch cup or glove** to reduce stress and avoid bites
* Provide many hiding places to reduce territorial aggression

While some individuals can be tamed with patient work, **most remain defensive**.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Plan for an **initial veterinary exam** soon after acquisition and **annual wellness checkups** with a reptile-experienced veterinarian.

**Common health issues:**

* Respiratory infections (from improper humidity/temperature)
* Mouth rot (stomatitis) from injuries or bacterial overgrowth
* Skin infections or shedding problems (dysecdysis)
* Mites and external parasites
* Nutritional metabolic bone disease (from inadequate calcium or UVB)

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or weakness
* Persistent refusal to eat
* Wheezing, open-mouth breathing, nasal discharge
* Retained shed, especially on toes
* Swollen jaw or mouth lesions
* Abnormal weight loss

Early veterinary care **improves outcomes** and prevents complications.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Tokay geckos **thrive in complex, vertical environments** that let them climb, hide, and explore.

**Enrichment strategies:**

* Multiple vertical and horizontal branches at different levels
* Cork bark, bamboo tubes, artificial and live plants for cover
* Secure hides at different heights
* Rearrange décor periodically to encourage exploration
* Varied textures and materials for natural climbing

A well-designed enclosure reduces **stress** and supports **natural behaviors**.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Named for their **distinctive, loud “to-kay” call**, often heard at night.
* Native to **Southeast Asian rainforests**, thriving in warm, humid conditions.
* Known for **beautiful blue-gray coloration** with bright orange or red spots.
* Have **strong jaws and a defensive temperament**—they bite hard!
* Typically live **10–20 years** in captivity with proper care.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Tall, secure terrarium (≥18×18×24 inches for adults)
* Ceramic heat emitter or halogen bulb (thermostat-controlled)
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Low-level UVB light (optional but beneficial)
* Multiple secure hides at different heights
* Vertical and horizontal climbing branches
* Live or artificial plants for cover and humidity
* Suitable substrate (coconut husk, cypress mulch, bioactive)
* Misting system or spray bottle
* Feeding tongs for safe insect delivery
* Gut-loaded, appropriately sized feeder insects
* Calcium and multivitamin supplements
* Cleaning supplies and reptile-safe disinfectants
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*