

# **Banded Rough Knobtail Gecko Care Sheet**

***Nephurus wheeleri cinctus***

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## **Facts:**

The scientific name for the Banded Rough Knobtail Gecko is *Nephurus wheeleri cinctus*, which are members of the Gekkonidae-- or Gecko family, and are native to Western Australia. They are terrestrial geckos, or ground dwelling, found in arid, rocky areas of hard-pack sandy soil strewn with rocks; living in burrowed or rocky crevice shelters. All Australian Knobtail Geckos are mainly "nocturnal" which means they hunt for food at night, and are generally less active during the day.

## **Description:**

Banded Rough Knobtails are medium-sized lizards with a thick, broad tail is with a round 'knob' on the tip. Their skin is covered by raised tubercles, and will typically have five black to brown bands across their body. Their background color can range from a salmon color to deep brick reds, and during the night may turn very pale to white. The average size of a full-grown adult Banded Rough Knobtail is around 4-5" snout to tail tip in length, and weigh around 20-24 grams for females. The smaller males average 3-4" length and 14-16 grams in weight. They have large heads and eyes, and longer, more spindly legs than Smooth Knobtail Geckos.

## **Housing:**

As a general rule, allow a minimum 24 square inches of surface area per adult Banded Rough Knobtail Gecko. These geckos like to hide in low ceiling cave-like dwellings where they will dig in the substrate and kick sand up on to their backs. Banded Rough Knobtail Geckos thrive best when housed individually, and males should not come in contact with each other or they may fight and become injured. Do NOT house adult Knobtail Geckos with babies or any other reptile species.

## **Heating:**

All reptiles are cold-blooded and rely on the temperature of their surrounding environment to keep warm or cool. Use an under tank heater (UTH) on one side only of the Knobtail Gecko's enclosure, thus allowing them to move back and forth within the enclosure to adjust their own body temperature. This is known as *thermal regulation*, and it is critical for their metabolism, digestion, and immune systems. The ideal temperature for Knobtail Geckos is around 88-92°F on the floor surface of the warm side of their enclosure, and normal room temperature (around 70-74°) on the cool side. Using a UTH is recommended instead of overhead heat sources since in their natural habitat they utilize the heat absorbed from the sun in the soil and rocks of to aid in their digestion.

## **Substrates:**

Use a ½-1" layer of non-silica sand which should cover the entire bottom of their enclosure. The cool end should be slightly dampened by misting with water a few times a week, making sure there are droplets on the sides of the enclosure for the gecko to drink from. Place the cave shelter on the warm side of the enclosure.

### **Lighting:**

Unlike most other reptiles that bask in the sun to keep warm and to assimilate Vitamin D from natural sunlight, Knobtail Geckos are mainly nocturnal so they do *not* require special lighting. Keep in mind that additional overhead lighting will raise the temperature in the enclosure. Be aware that Knobtail Geckos' eyes are very sensitive and their eyesight is poor in bright light. Never expose your gecko to direct sunlight.

### **Handling:**

Banded Rough Knobtail Geckos will tolerate occasional handling, and are not as easily stressed as their Smooth Knobtail cousins. When you must handle your gecko, it is best to slowly offer your hand, kept low with your palm up, before picking them up. Avoid reaching down from over their head to grab them because they may become startled thinking you are a predator coming down to attack them. Always handle your Knobtail Gecko with care, and *never* grab it by the tail. Like all lizards, when they are attacked or threatened they can "drop" their tails. When a lizard loses its tail, it becomes vulnerable to disease and infection until it grows a new one.

### **Shedding:**

Reptiles shed their skin on regular basis, and Knobtail should molt about every 2-4 weeks. These geckos will **not** eat their molted skin like their Smooth Knobtail cousins. It is extremely important that *ALL* the skin comes off, especially from the eyes (eyecaps) and toes, as geckos can lose their digits to infection if the skin does not completely shed. If shedding is a problem for your Rough Knobtail Gecko, it may be necessary to keep the substrate around their cave moist by misting it with water, or placing a damp paper towel inside. Keep in mind that Knobtail Geckos have very sensitive skin, and can develop infections if the substrate is too wet.

### **Feeding:**

Knobtail Geckos mainly eat *live* crickets and roach nymphs, and hand-fed mealworms. Be careful not to feed them anything larger than about 3/4 the size of their heads to prevent choking. Knobtail Geckos can become stressed if too many feeders are introduced at a time. Babies should be fed 2-4 appropriate sized crickets or roaches every day until they reach about 2 inches in length, then larger prey every other day until they become full-grown in about 10 -12 months. Adults can be fed 3-4 larger crickets or roaches 3 times a week. Giving your gecko a variety of foods is recommended.

### **Supplements:**

Food items *must* be "dusted" with a mixture of ultra-fine calcium powder every 2 or 3 feedings, and reptile vitamins once a week. Obtain commercial reptile calcium powder and vitamins such as *Sticky-Tongue "Miner-All"*, *RepCal*, *Zoo-Med*, or *Fluker* products. Put calcium powder in a zip-lock bag or commercial cricket duster and "dust" live food items prior to feeding by shaking them gently in the bag or container until they are coated. Vitamins should be given weekly using the same method. The health of your Knobtail Gecko is dependent on the proper supplementation of calcium and vitamins in their diet; otherwise, serious diseases can result. Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) is caused by calcium deficiency, and can permanently disfigure or ultimately kill your gecko.

### **Gut Loading:**

Live crickets, roaches, and mealworms should be fed nutritious food like pieces of whole grain cereal, oatmeal, squash, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, collard greens, and a slice of red potato for moisture.

### **Quarantine:**

Regardless of where you get your Knobtail Gecko it is *critical* that when you get any new addition to your gecko colony, the new gecko(s) *must* be quarantined from any of your existing reptiles for at least 30 days, but 90 days is preferred. Countless reptiles have suffered and died needlessly as a result of one gecko infected with disease or parasites and transmitting it to others.