

# Yucatan Banded Gecko Care Sheet

*Coleonyx elegans*

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## **Facts**

The scientific name for the Yucatan Banded Gecko is *Coleonyx elegans*, which means "a sheath and nail or claw" in Greek, and "elegant" in Latin. They are members of the Gekkonidae-- or Gecko family. Yucatan Banded Geckos are terrestrial lizards, or ground dwelling, originally from the tropical jungle regions in the Southern Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and Belize. Yucatan Banded Geckos are mainly "nocturnal" which means they hunt for food at night, and are generally less active during the day.

## **Description:**

Yucatan Banded Geckos are long, sleek, lizards with primarily black pigment swirled with bands or aberrant patterns of tan, gold, yellow, orange, and red. The average size of a full-grown adult is approximately 5" snout to tail tip.

## **Housing:**

Yucatan Banded Geckos like to hide in shelter dwellings kept on the warm side of their enclosure. Adult males must *never* be housed together in the same vivarium or they will fight and injure or kill each other. A single male can be kept with several females, and several females can share the same enclosure, although Yucatan Banded Geckos are generally solitary and thrive better when housed individually. Avoid crowded conditions, as they may become territorial and fight over space, and especially food. Do NOT house adult Yucatan Banded Geckos with babies or any other reptile species under any circumstances.

## **Substrate:**

A ½ - 1" layer of substrate consisting 50% orchid bark and 50% peat moss should be used, keeping the cool side of the enclosure slightly damp by misting with water 2-3 times weekly in order to keep the humidity at around 70%.

## **Heating:**

All reptiles are cold-blooded and rely on the temperature of their surrounding environment to keep warm or cool. Use an under tank (UTH) heater on one side only of Yucatan Banded Gecko's enclosure, thus allowing them to move back and forth within the tank 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 Yucatan Banded Geckos is around 86-90° on the warm side of their enclosure, and normal room temperature (around 70-74°) on the cool side.

## **Lighting:**

Unlike most other reptiles that bask in the sun to keep warm and to assimilate Vitamin D from natural sunlight, Yucatan Banded Geckos are mainly nocturnal and do *not* require special lighting. Keep in mind that additional overhead lighting will raise the temperature in the enclosure. *Never* expose your gecko to prolonged direct sunlight.

## **Handling:**

Yucatan Banded Geckos tend to be skittish and shy, and do not tolerate excessive handling.

### **Shedding:**

Reptiles shed their skin on regular basis, and Yucatan Banded Geckos should molt about every 2-4 weeks. Unlike some other reptiles, Yucatan Banded Geckos will eat the skin after it comes off, so don't be alarmed if you don't see any shed skin in their enclosure!

### **Feeding:**

Captive Yucatan Banded Geckos feed mainly on *live* crickets, small roach nymphs, mealworms, waxworms, or silk-worms. Be careful not to feed them anything larger than about 3/4 the size of their heads to prevent choking. Babies should be fed 4-6 small crickets or mealworms 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 6-7 larger crickets or mealworms 2 or 3 times a week. Waxworms should be fed only occasionally because they are high in fat and cholesterol. of foods is recommended.

### **Supplements:**

Yucatan Banded Geckos require supplementation of food items by "dusting" with a mixture of ultra-fine calcium powder every 2 or 3 feedings, and reptile vitamins once a week. Studies have shown that Yucatan Banded Geckos do not tolerate excessive Vitamin D3, so chose a calcium product that does not contain any.

Obtain commercial reptile calcium powder and vitamins such as *Sticky-Tongue "Miner-All"*, *RepCal*, *Zoo-Med*, or *Fluker* products. Place 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 to coat them. The health of your Yucatan Banded 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 Yucatan Banded Gecko.

### **Gut Loading:**

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

### **Quarantine:**

Regardless of where you get your Yucatan Banded Gecko it is *critical* that when you get any new addition to your reptile 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 other geckos.