



Egg Incubation Method 1

It seems there is an endless request on how to incubate gecko eggs. Unfortunately there is no one answer to the problem. Different species require different methodologies. Furthermore, what works for one person, may lead to disaster for another. Part of the problem is unclear information. Often the descriptions have many interpretations because they are vague. This may not be intentional, but the result is, what it is, none the less. This is not intended to be a treatise on the only way to prepare eggs for incubation, just a recipe that has proven itself over time to be successful.

This method has been employed for Crested geckos (*Rhacodactylus ciliatus*) with a 100% hatch rate, given the eggs are viable and no external misfortune becomes them. It should be explained that once they are laid, gecko eggs should not be moved. That is not to say that they must remain stationary, but rather, that their orientation with respect to ground must remain unchanged. This is because embryos quickly adhere to the shell and remain fixed in place. Moving in the egg submerges the embryo in natural fluids within the egg and drowns it. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to retain any spatial geometry when transferring eggs from their respective laying site and the container which will house them. Care must always be taken to insure the geometry remain static, even after transferral. Casual jostling can dislodge the egg from rest and kill the baby that is now developing. This has happened to the author on more than one occasion.

The instructions are simple and the materials are easily obtained. The following is a text description that has appeared, in one form or another, countless times on the Internet. It is easy, but seems to be largely misunderstood. Hence this diatribe (I like using big words you have to look up). What follows are pictures showing the procedure. Perhaps the pictures will convey the things that text, up to this time, has not been able to properly describe.

The Method



Fill a small deli cup with vermiculite. I know, lots of folks hate this stuff, equal numbers swear by it, in any event, just get some and use it.



Fill the deli cup/vermiculite with water (that's H₂O), making a swamp. There is no "too much water" at this point.



Drain out the water (you could use the lid of the deli cup) just like draining pasta or your favorite vegetable (Brussels sprouts ?).



Take the wet vermiculite in your hand(s) and squeeze out the water. This will make a mess, so be sure to wear your best clothes. You will lose a lot of material. In the end the amount of vermiculite lost is about 50% (as it goes down the drain). This is fine. You want the deli cup about half full of wet material when you are done



Put the vermiculite back into the deli cup and level it out. It should come up to just below any holes in the sides of the container. OOPS, yeah, you need to put some air holes in the container. Either in the lid or the sides of the cup. I am used to using commercial cups that already have holes in the sides of the container. Not too many, maybe half a dozen 1/8" holes around the periphery.



Make two (gex usually lay 2 eggs) depressions in the vermiculite with a finger or thumb. The ruts are about a half inch deep. This is where the eggs go.



Carefully transfer the eggs from where they are to where you want them (in the 2 depressions). Remember to retain geometry (all that raving you read before). This is important. If she laid them vertically, dig the vermiculite and put them in the cup that way.

Move the loose vermiculite around the eggs until they are about half buried in vermiculite (not 6 feet under, not laying on top, but half way buried). This does two things. First it keeps them from moving (the geometry thing again, see spatial relations) and provides direct contact with moisture, remember these are Rhac eggs. Other gex have different needs.

Put the lid on the deli cup (everyone should be able to do this).

Put the cup in the incubator, book shelf, dishwasher or whatever you are using.

LEAVE THEM ALONE. This is another important part that a lot cannot cope with. Do not get them out and inspect them. candle them, juggle them, water them or do anything to them. They are just ducky the way they are, LEAVE THEM ALONE. By the time they hatch the vermiculate will be TOTALLY dry. This is what you want, this is what the gex want, this works, trust me...

The adjunct to this is deciding whether the eggs did not hatch because of incubation methodology or infertility. Eggs that are found in the cage with dimpled or caved in sides will rarely hatch. These puppies have dried out and are probably already dead at that point. You should still give it a go, but do not expect much. Infertile eggs will cave in and mold quickly, usually in the first two weeks (it takes 50 to 70 days for ciliatus to hatch). Healthy, viable eggs grow in size as they mature. They will easily double in size. Eggs that do not grow are duds. Growing eggs that all of a sudden collapse and mold, have died. This is generally due to violating the geometry thing and drowning the embryo.

Lastly, the sex-temperature controversy. Jury is still out on that one. The author incubates at 75° F and gets well over 50% females at that temperature. This goes against the prevailing TSD aficionados published results, so you be the judge.