

Tarantula

Average Size: 2" to 10" long

Life Span: 5+ years with proper care

Diet and Feeding:

Staple diet: Tarantulas eat live feeder insects of appropriate size, such as gut-loaded (recently fed) crickets, mealworms, super worms and roaches. They may also eat frozen pinkie mice, thawed and warmed to room temperature.

Feeding: Juveniles should be fed several times a week, and adults should be fed once a week. A good rule of thumb is to make sure the food is smaller than the tarantula. Be sure to remove any uneaten live food, as it may bite the legs of a resting tarantula and cause injury.

Water: Always have a shallow dish of fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water available. Place a stone in the dish to keep the tarantula and crickets from drowning.

Housing/Habitat:

Housing: Your tarantula will require a plastic or glass aquarium, about three times the leg-span in length, and two times the leg-span in width. The height of the aquarium should be the length of the tarantula for ground dwellers and about ten inches for tree-dwelling tarantulas. Make sure the aquarium has a secure lid with adequate ventilation.

Hiding Places: Be sure to provide a place to hide, such as pieces of bark propped up and arranged to form a hidey hole. Tree dwelling tarantulas also need twigs and branches to build their webs.

Temperature: Climate should range from 72° F to 82° F. Place heating strips or pads under the habitat.

Substrate: Mulch-type commercial material may be used—unbleached paper towels, soil, dampened sphagnum moss, and bark. Avoid gravel and artificial turf (too harsh).

Lighting: Keep your tarantula's home in a darker part of the room, away from sunlight. Avoid incandescent lights, which are too drying and can actually dry out your tarantula. Use a black or infrared light to watch your tarantula after dark.

Normal Behavior and Social Interaction:

Handling tarantulas is not recommended. If they feel threatened, they may bite, or run and fall. Even a short fall can cause serious or even fatal injury.

Tarantula bites. The bite of a tarantula is equivalent to a bee sting, and is very painful. Some individuals may be especially sensitive. If bitten, seek medical attention. Another part of the tarantula's natural defense is "flicking"—the hairs on some tarantulas can be flicked at/toward potential threat, and these hairs can cause allergic reaction or irritation.

Tarantulas are solitary. Keep only one tarantula to a cage.

Molting. When tarantulas molt, they lie on their back with their feet up in the air. Juveniles molt about four times a year, and adults molt once a year. Your tarantula may stop eating up to two weeks before a molt. Do not disturb him during this time, and be sure to remove all live food from the habitat as even a cricket could harm the tarantula during this time.

Habitat Maintenance:

- Use a fine mesh net or cup to remove tarantula during maintenance.
- Fill water bowl daily.
- **Spray-mist the habitat as needed to keep the habitat moist. Tarantulas need the correct humidity to stay healthy, and dehydration can be fatal.**

Health/Cleanliness:

Please remember that all pets may bite or scratch, and may transmit disease to humans. Keep your pet's home clean and wash your hands before and after handling your tarantula's habitat and contents.

Infants, young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and the infirm or elderly are at greater risk of infections and should use caution when in contact with the pet or its habitat. Consult your doctor for more information.

The information on this care sheet is NOT a substitute for regular veterinary care.