

Australian Tarantulas

Theraphosidae Family



Food:

Crickets are best choice for an all round staple feeder choice as they seem to be a favourite over woodies which are a bit higher in nutritional value, but also better at hiding and escaping or just staying out of reach more from your spider. mealworms are ok but best to watch them eat it, if it burrows it can harm your spider later and on top of that they hold very little nutritional value and are higher in fat content so are best used like a snack or not at all.

At the end of winter for breeding females that have had their appetite slowed through winter may also be offered pinky mouse at the end of winter to build up a lot of nutrients for her coming egg-sack, this should also not be done regularly as it would be far too much calcium for the spider overtime.

Only feed live prey to your spider that is no bigger than the spider's carapace (top head plate) to try and avoid any waste leftover or the spider being overpowered and feeding should only really be needed weekly. It is recommended to do a spot clean the next day and or take out any uneaten prey items.

Water:

When setting up the enclosure it is a great idea to add some damp sphagnum moss garnished around the surface, this will help retain humidity and something to drink and just routinely misting when the moss starts to look dry is the best way to offer water. there is no need for use of a water bowl or anything like that because they can do more harm than good, it really just a place for bacteria to breed and your spider could even possibly drown. misting the enclosure also provides the right humidity that is needed.

Enclosure:

Tarantulas do best in small spaces closest to that of the conditions you'd expect

a burrow to feel like if you were to crawl inside one, I've noted from experience that if you put a tarantula in an 8 litre tub about half full with substrate it will redesign it and make structure from the substrate so it has a tunnel system to hide, but where as in that same size tub if I fill it about two thirds full, the tarantulas then seem to use the much narrower surface space as a burrow chamber and web that up to the lid on top instead so it can be quite interesting in captivity and above that optimal room also allows easier hunting of prey for your spider.

For adult tarantulas a space of 30cm x 30cm is recommended. We house all our spiderlings in 500ml screw lid round tubs and juveniles in a 5.5 litre decor tub, but anything similar will be fine. Making sure it's secure with clip lids or screw top is even better. Reptile glass and acrylic terrariums are ideal for viewing, and plastic storage tubs are also amazing and they thrive in them if you want to have a big collection, this may be a cheaper option for you. Keep in mind that if you use a glass terrarium only get top opening to allow room for enough substrate and also try to not get one with a mesh lid otherwise you will need to cover or replace the mesh with some acrylic so that your spider won't get its limbs stuck or amputated.

Substrate:

Peat moss is what we and so many others in the hobby use it is a great medium with very good water holding ability which makes for less maintenance later after you have your enclosure set up, it's also good practice to leave one patch or side of the enclosure drier so that the spider can move to where it feels comfortable at any given time. Keep substrate deep enough to allow your spider to create a retreat in any enclosure you choose (several centimetres). To reduce the time it takes for your spider to settle in we also advise you to provide a starter burrow for your spider with your fingers or a paint brush.

Temperature:

Tarantula spiders are native to tropical Queensland for the most part, therefore they are tropical spider in a sense, you will find them most active at temperature of around 22 - 26°C, when temperature is higher than this it is best to just cool the room down your spiders are kept in with whatever cooling means you usually use, especially when greater than 30°C
Same applies for the when it gets very cold they can endure temperatures of as low as 10°C for a short time but when it drops any lower than 16°C best to be

sure is to heat the room they are in with a oil heater or similar but it is never a good idea to heat the enclosures directly this can be fatal.

Humidity:

Tarantulas are primitive spiders (mygalomorph) with 2 pairs of book lungs which need moisture to help them function and so they have not changed much for so many years unlike the modern day spider (Araneomorph) which have one pair of book lungs and tracheal tubes allowing them to live in drier conditions. Mygalomorphs including tarantulas have not become as evolved so they need to stay in the retreat of their burrow where it is perfect humidity so they don't desiccate and die. humidity of (60-80% is best this will be maintained just with your routine misting but don't allow substrate to get too damp or waterlogged. Arid zone species (*Selenotholus* and *Selenotypus* spp.) come from more arid areas which tends to have people thinking they require less moisture/lower humidity and that coastal and rainforest species (*Phlogius* & *Coremiocnemis* spp.) require more.

In short this is not the case they can all be housed the same in captivity because we cannot replicate their habitat the same as we see in the wild. (Selenos are obligate burrowers for this reason, so that they can dig down to where the substrate is at ideal humidity and get away from the heat).

Handling:

It's not uncommon that keepers will want to hold their fuzz babies just keep in mind that they won't remember you or get friendly with you and they can suffer bad injuries from a fall or even die, from experience it is best to check their nature at each given time with a paint brush and get them into a stubby holder or similar if you have one handy then while you are low to the ground or on a soft surface you can then coax it out the holder.

keep in mind also that if they bite it can make you feel sick for a little while as they are mildly venomous and may also experience some pain at the sight of the bite along with the mechanical damage from the fangs, if bitten its best to clean properly and keep an eye on it and your state if anything seems to get worse seek medical help immediately!

Other than that though handling is not necessary and all manoeuvring can be done with said stubby holder or a catch cup.

Other Problems:

Tarantulas have claw tufts, which are dense patches of fine hair on the ends of

their feet which allow them to grip to and climb even smooth surfaces like acrylic and glass, when rehousing you can put their enclosure into another bigger tub or bathtub so you have an extra safe barrier to catch them if they escape when you need to do maintenance etc.

Lifespan:

Up to 25 years for females, although males will live much shorter lives and not long after maturing, they often go off food at this point with the sole intention to mate to continue their genes and species but then sadly die.

