



Desert Scorpion

Urodacus yaschenkoi

Desert Scorpions are commonly found throughout Australia's dry interior. They live fairly deep underground in a spiralling burrow with depths of up to 1 metre being recorded. Their burrow entrances are quite easy to spot since they are always D shaped and will also have a neat pile of freshly scraped substrate just directly in front of it, from where they have combed the sand out the hole with their legs as they kick it back. They make sure to keep their burrow entrances tidy every night for better chance of catching small prey that finds it difficult to climb back up the loose sand surrounding so every evening the scorpion removes any debris that has managed to obstruct the entrance.

They are also very much like *Urodacus armatus* but are a lot bigger and have longer fingers on the claws and likely the largest venom sac compared to all other Australian scorpions, They are often found alongside *U. armatus* in the wild.

Max size for this large scorpion is 80 - 100mm and are also known commonly as Inland Robust Scorpion because they are quite chunky. This species is often found in large populations and would make up one of the biggest total biomasses in some areas, second only to ants.

Like other scorpions within the *Urodacus* genus the Desert Scorpion has a mild venom it is similar in pain to that of the rest within the genus I would have to say from experience although their large sting and skittish nature makes them somewhat intimidating. Refer to Flinders Ranges care guide for pain description. Like all Australian scorpions they are not considered medically significant, though if symptoms get worse or concerning seek medical attention immediately!

Invertebrates including scorpions grow by shedding their exoskeleton this is known as ecdysis or moulting. Other invertebrates may continue to moult

throughout their whole lives while *Urodacus* Scorpions will only moult a total number of 5 times throughout their whole lives, as follows: 1st instar(newborn), 2nd instar(4 weeks), 3rd instar(1year), 4th instar(2years), 5th instar(3years), 6th instar(4 years - Adult). they usually moult at night out of the way with less chance of being disturbed.

Maternal:

Urodacus scorpions have very long gestation periods, which can last from 12 - 18 months. This species can have 40 babies and give live birth although known to be very hard to breed in captivity where they absorb any embryo they may be carrying just because of their skittish nature.

If you happen to have a wild caught gravid female give birth though then it's important that no food should be offered to mum and babies during this period. Once they disperse only then should they be individually separated and fed a cricket leg each and mum fed up to regain nutrients. If they seem to disperse too early before they've moulted it could be that mum is losing moisture content so she is opting for her survival over maternal care. If this happens mist mums enclosure and just put all the babies in a separate one fully sealed and similar setting to that of the mums, do not offer them food until they moult to 2nd instar and darken.

Food:

Live prey weekly, although pre-killed prey may also be accepted.

Crickets and cockroaches are the best choice of feeder for pretty much all predatory invertebrates, but you can use other things like mealworms but they have more fatty content and are best spared for as a snack. They can handle large prey especially bigger size scorpions as they will overpower it with both their large claws and then also use venom from their sting to assist by paralysing the prey for them.

Water:

Keep the substrate misted and damp enough so that it holds humidity and can hold shape when you grab some in your hand. Your scorpion will drink by absorbing moisture from their substrate in through layers in their cuticle so they don't require a water bowl, regular misting of the enclosure and a good water gradient will be best so that the scorpion can self regulate as it pleases/needs.

Enclosure:

This species isn't heaps suited to captivity but for best results you should keep them in a ventilated false bottom setup. To do this you put some pebbles or small stone medium in the bottom at least about 4 cm with some type of tubing running

down one of the corners that reaches the stones and comes right up to just under where the lid of the enclosure will sit, followed by a layer of washed play sand again the same at least 4 cm. Then add the main depth to the enclosure by adding in the actual substrate mix for the scorpion to burrow in the sand underneath will act as a drainage medium for the pebbles at the bottom so when you put water in the tube it can feed into the drainage pebble area and high ventilation lets it evaporate up through the substrate as it dries. It is good to let the setup dry out completely for brief periods for best results.

About roughly a size of 30cm x 30cm is a good size but can get by with slightly smaller.

Substrate:

Mix peat moss with water till it clumps and holds but doesn't drip excess water out then mix through dry sand to a 50/50 ratio.

Temperature:

The best temperatures are 15 - 25°C, with 25°C being optimal.

Handling:

Like mentioned this is a very defensive and skittish species of scorpion, also known to spray venom from its sting when agitated, if you attempt to handle them it's important to be very alert or you can be stung quite easily.

