

## Scorpion Information Care Sheet



### Check list

- A glass terrarium
- Peat substrate or gravel
- A ceramic pot or ornament
- Heat mat
- Food (crickets)
- Gravel
- Plastic plants
- An aquarium light
- Water bowl

### Reasons for owning a scorpion

First and foremost the reasons for owning a scorpion should never ever include "for the thrill of it". Owning a scorpion so that you can show off to your friends is an extremely irresponsible attitude. The only reason for keeping scorpions is to observe a brilliant animal which, if cared for properly, will do well in captivity.

### Housing

Most species of scorpion can be kept in small groups and require relatively little in the way of specialised housing. The main requirements (as they are for most invertebrate pets) are that the enclosure is secure and can be maintained at an appropriate temperature and humidity. Scorpions are best kept in a glass aquarium with a good escape proof preferably lockable lid. Many scorpions are good climbers although these species tend to be the more dangerous ones and are not recommended. The type of substrate used in your terrarium depends on the particular species of scorpion you own, these fall in to two very basic types: Forest species and Desert Species. Forest species for example those belonging to the genera *Pandinus* and *Heterometrus* come from Africa and Asia and require warm, humid conditions. A deep layer of peat-free compost (6-7cm) should be placed in the terrarium; this can be covered with orchid bark chippings. The top of the substrate should be sprayed with water every day or so but never to a degree that it becomes very wet. Care should be taken that the substrate does not become mouldy or covered in fungus. Desert species for example those from the genera *Centruroides*, *Buthus* and *Androctonus* (plus many others) require considerably drier conditions. The terrarium should be filled with approximately 10cm of coarse sand; desert scorpions require little moisture and rarely need to be misted. You can decorate the terrarium with some flat pieces of wood, cork bark or pieces of ceramic plant pot which not only make the enclosure look more attractive but give your scorpions something to burrow under.

### Heating

Scorpions are nocturnal and as such have no positive requirement for light. The best method for heating the tank is to use a heat mat. A suitably sized heat mat can be bought from you local pet shop (normally those selling lizards and other reptiles have a good range). A good heat mat should maintain the terrarium temperature at 25°C. You should position the heat mat so that it covers approximately one third of the base of the terrarium. This produces a temperature gradient and the scorpions can move between warm and cooler areas to regulate their body temperature. It is important to note that if the temperature is too great the scorpions will **burrow** into the substrate to avoid the heat, unfortunately this brings them closer to the heat mat and there is a danger they will over heat and die. It is for this reason that the heat mat should **not cover the entire base** of the terrarium and it may be worth turning off the mat during particularly warm summer spells (this obviously depends on where you live). An alternate approach that avoids the issue of scorpions burrowing towards the heat mat is to attach the heat mat to the side of the tank rather than position it underneath. This allows the scorpion to burrow safely or cool itself by moving to the side furthest from the heat mat. It is also strongly recommended that scorpion keepers use thermometers (such as those

available for use with reptiles) to monitor the temperatures at various places within the tank and ensure a good temperature gradient is maintained.

## Feeding

All scorpions are carnivores eating insects, spiders and even small lizards and snakes. The amount of food required by your scorpion will depend on the species and size. A large scorpion (eg *Pandinus imperator*) will often eat two or three adult crickets a week. It is best to feed your scorpions at night so that their behaviour pattern will more closely resemble that of wild scorpions. The scorpions will not feed properly if kept in unsuitable conditions so left-over food may be an indication that something is not right. If you keep live food for your scorpion then you should also ensure that the live food is kept in appropriate conditions (adequate space, correct temperature and humidity and access to food and water).

## Handling

The best rule is to never handle your scorpion. Species belonging to the Genus *Pandinus* or *Heterometrus* are generally considered docile and relatively harmless however other species are potentially lethal. If you must handle your scorpions it is best to do so very gently with a long pair of foam tip forceps.

## Recommended species

*Pandinus imperator*: The Imperial Scorpion/Emperor Scorpion. One of the biggest species of scorpion and probably the best for a novice. These scorpions can grow to some 15cm in length. They are black in colour although they do appear to have a green tinge in a certain light. They originate from West Africa and should be kept in a warm humid habitat as described above. The sting of *Pandinus imperator* is frequently described as being like that of a bee. However, it is worth remembering that some people develop serious allergic reactions to bee stings.

Recently other *Pandinus* species have become available. However, these have not been properly identified and are often more aggressive. They are smaller than Emperor scorpions and are generally labelled as Red Claw Scorpions by traders. Not recommended for novice scorpion owners.

Scorpions belonging to the Genus *Heterometrus* are often as large as Emperor scorpions and should be kept in much the same way. They originate from forests in Asia and also make good pets, their sting is said to be of similar potency as that of *Pandinus*. The most commonly available species are *Heterometrus spinifer* (Thai Black) and *Heterometrus javanensis* (Javanese Jungle Scorpion).

## Species not recommended for the novice

*Hadrurus* sp: Hairy Scorpions. A large scorpion (10cm) which does well in the desert setup described above and requires no water (getting all it needs from the atmosphere) - they dislike being misted. They are also considerably more aggressive than Emperor Scorpions with a more potent sting.

Scorpions from the Genus *Androctonus* are relatively large scorpions from Africa and the Middle East. They are extremely dangerous and care should be taken as some of the larger species (particularly *A. bicolor*) have a passing resemblance to the Emperor Scorpion - make sure you are confident that your dealer knows exactly what they are selling. *Androctonus bicolor* have more slender pedipalps (commonly called pincers or claws) than *Pandinus imperator* and a much thicker tail. Note: Narrow pedipalps on a scorpion often indicate a potent sting.

Bark Scorpions (eg *Centruroides* and *Tityus*) should also be avoided by those new to keeping scorpions. Bark scorpions can be recognised as they carry their tail curled to the side of the body rather than arching over the top (ie. the traditional image of scorpions).

## CONTACT US

Our friendly staff is always available to answer your questions so please don't hesitate to contact us for further information.