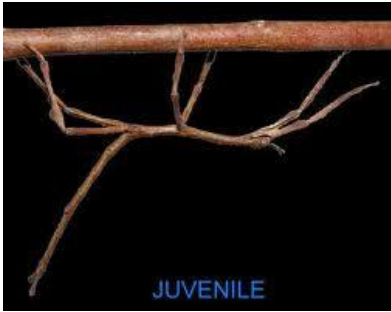


# PASSION *for* PETS

## Stick Insects Information Care Sheet



JUVENILE



### Check list

- A tank/terrarium
- A mesh lid for tank
- Decorations to climb on
- A heat mat or basking light
- A reflector with a UV tube
- A couple of solid sticks to hang from and climb onto
- Fresh Gum (Eucalyptus) leaves to eat
- Spray/mist bottle
- Hydrometer
- Bark substrate

### SETTING UP YOUR HOUSING

It is important for anyone interested in keeping Stick Insects as a pet to be able to house the insect(s) properly and not mistreat them. As like any other pet, they require appropriate housing, cleanliness, fresh food and care. Any creature that you look after as a pet is your responsibility.

You need to look after it so that it has a good, long and happy life.

Stick Insects are usually solitary animals,

so they don't need other insects to "keep them company". Therefore, the more space in the tank/enclosure, the better. If the cage is too small or crowded, they tend to either eat each other and/or don't survive very long or they have problems moulting and growing and may become deformed.

A tall tank/enclosure is best with wire or mesh on one side or on the top, for fresh air to enter and for the insects to grip onto, lined with newspaper, sand or leaf litter.

### FEEDING

All Stick Insects (Plasmids') are herbivores, feeding on the leaves of trees and shrubs. The Goliath Stick Insect prefers fresh native Eucalyptus (gum) leaves. The Nymphs (young insects) prefer the younger, softer leaves at the tips of the branches (new growth), while adults are able to feed on young and older leaves.

You should provide them with a plentiful and fresh source of leaves. The stem/branches of leaves can be kept in a jar/container of fresh water to keep the leaves alive for up to a week (keep the opening of the jar covered, to stop any eggs laid from then falling into the water). Keep the water in the jar fresh so the leaves don't die. Spray the leaves and the insects lightly with water occasionally, so as the insects drink the water and it also creates a humid environment in the enclosure, which the insects prefer. This also helps the insects with moulting.

Change the leaves every week, or when they start to dry out. Use leaves that you know have not been sprayed with any toxic or chemical sprays. Also wash the leaves to remove any pollution or dust before putting them into the insect enclosure.

### DANGERS FOR THE STICK INSECT

Make sure there are no toxic household chemicals around. Don't use fly sprays or other insecticides near them.

Other pets, such as cats, dogs, rats etc might be curious about them, so keep them away. If you keep the insects outside (e.g. on a veranda), be careful that they are not open to attack from birds and other animals.

Also be careful to have clean hands when handling the insects, as they are very sensitive to chemicals and be gentle with them when handling.

## BEHAVIOUR

Stick Insects are usually solitary insects. Even when they are kept together, they do not usually socialize. They will just hang around from the leaves for hours without moving sometimes. They are more active at night than during the day and are slower moving, the larger they grow.

When disturbed, a Stick Insect may sway, imitating a dead leaf or stick swaying in the breeze like they are dancing. This is a defence mechanism. They feel vibrations and they sway differently for different vibrations. In the wild, they sway to vibrations to stop from falling out of their tree.

When disturbed, they also open their wings repeatedly, showing off their bright colours and sound as though they are hissing, in order to frighten off predators. Also, be sure to watch that your fingers are not near their legs when this happens whilst handling them, as the spines on their legs are sharp and they may try to grasp your fingers between them!

## LIFE SPAN

After hatching from their egg, a nymph (juvenile) will moult several times before reaching maturity and development may take from a few weeks, up to a few months.

These growth stages they go through, called moulting (or metamorphosis), where they shed their skin, or exoskeleton, means each (or nymph) is slightly more developed and larger in size than the previous one.

After a juvenile insect has moulted a few times and grown a little larger, their colouring will change and they will turn into the bright green colour they are as adults. They also often eat their moulted skin (so don't be alarmed), as this is full of protein and is a good source of food and nutrients for the stick insect. Do not handle the insect after it has moulted, as its exoskeleton will still be soft.

If a Stick Insect loses a leg, the leg starts to grow back slowly with each moult but will never fully grow back. The insect will survive though and keep on growing and moulting until it is fully grown.

The Goliath Stick Insect is a large, heavily built species. Females are known to grow larger than 15cm long and live from one to three years (longer than the males). The males are much smaller in size and fly more easily. Females usually don't fly as they are too heavy but they do glide.

## REPRODUCTION

Many female Goliaths do not need to mate in order to produce fertile eggs. All the eggs produced will hatch into females. If the females do not mate with a male, the nymphs (young) may either be male or female. The majority of the Phasmids are usually female and adult females lay eggs whether fertilized or not (they are asexual).

## EGGS

Females usually lay their eggs by flicking the egg from their tails and can lay between 100 and 1000 throughout their adult life (depending on the species). The eggs may hatch in the same season they were laid or hatch up to 3 seasons later, depending on the climatic conditions.

The eggs have a cap or knob on the end of them and they resemble a gum-nut, having a wood-like appearance. Collect the eggs and keep them in a container with some droppings, on a bed of sand or coco-peat, with a mesh lid (to allow air into the container). Eggs will take from a few weeks and up to a year or two to hatch if they are kept warm (around 25 degrees). Spray/mist with water once or twice weekly to stop them from drying out.

Transfer the young insects to a cage and feed with soft new-growth Eucalyptus leaves. Be careful handling them, as they are very fragile.

## CONTACT US

Our friendly staff are always willing to help answer your questions or find the information you need so please don't hesitate to contact us.