

Land Hermit Crab

“*Coenobita clypeatus*”

If there is one pet that is guaranteed to be clean, quiet, and non allergenic, it is the land hermit crab. These crabs make great pets for everyone who wants a pet that is easy to care for and fun to watch climbing branches and corals and daintily picking at some favorite piece of fruit or vegetable. These crabs do like company so have at least two, if not a whole colony, to keep them happy and active.

General Diet

Special land hermit crab food is available and made specifically to give your hermit crabs all the nutrients they need. They will also enjoy many types of vegetables and fruits such as romaine lettuce, apple, orange, and for a special treat some raw coconut. They also enjoy chewing on bark, except pine and cedar, especially if it is decaying. Any uneaten fruits and vegetables should be removed daily and their crab food changed at least three times a week. They will not eat much, so only offer them small amounts of food.

Vitamins/Supplements

Hermit crabs do need calcium and the best way to provide this is offer them oyster shell or a cuttlebone (sold for birds) and/or well-cleaned egg shells.

Housing

Land hermit crabs like to be kept with at least one other land hermit crab, so it is best to keep them in at least a five gallon, but preferably a ten gallon, tank. A glass top (in drier areas) or a screen top with half of it covered in glass (in more humid areas) should be used on top of the tank. Gravel or calcium sand can be used as a base. Provide a large, flat water dish with a sponge and/or climbing branch so they can easily get in and out for a bath or drinking. These are land hermit crabs so they can drown. Water used in this dish should be either bottled, left out overnight, or with fish water conditioner added. Do not use straight tap water right from the faucet. Branches of non-resinous wood and coral can be placed in the tank for them to climb.

Be sure to offer land hermit crabs different shells in their tank at all times with slightly larger openings than the shell they live in, as they will grow out of their shells over time and will want to change to a new one. Sometimes they also change shells because they like another shell better or their old one is dirty. It is best to buy shells that have been cleaned completely and are safe to use for hermit crabs.

Land hermit crabs are semitropical and so need the temperature of their tank to be in the high seventies to low eighties to stay comfortable. The easiest way to provide this heat is with an under-tank heater. Place the heater toward one end of the tank so if they feel too warm, they can move to the other end. Some type of heat must be given to land hermit crabs to keep them healthy.

These crabs love high humidity and so their environment should be misted well once or twice a day depending on how dry the air is around them. They can also be given a bath outside of their cage once to twice weekly for a few minutes in a bin with room temperature or slightly warmer

water up to the middle of their shells. Like the water in their bowls, the bath water should not be straight tap water.

Sanitation/General Care

Change the water in the dish every other day and clean out the water dish thoroughly twice a week. The gravel or sand used on the bottom should be cleaned as often as needed, and this will depend on tank size and the number of crabs in the tank. (Note that sand can be spot cleaned and used longer while gravel can be easily washed out.) We will be happy to recommend how often your tank set up should be cleaned out.

Health Care

Land hermit crabs are generally very hardy and healthy when kept in the right conditions (i.e. high humidity and temperature between 76 and 84 degrees). If they are kept too cool and/or too dry they will get very lethargic and can die. Be sure their heater is working properly and their tank is kept humid. Once in a while hermit crabs will shed their exoskeleton to be able to grow and to replace any missing legs. During this time they will be quiet for a few days, and the cage should be kept more humid during this time.

Special Section - Handling Precaution

Hermit crabs will crawl on your outstretched hand but be cautious with their big pincher claw. They use it to climb and will grab on if they feel they are about to fall which can be very painful. If they do grab on, don't try to pull away, as that will make the crab grab on harder, but put the pincher under some very warm water without moving the part it is grabbed on to and the claw will release. Most times, especially with larger crabs, it is best to pick them up by the top of the shell and gently place them on an area where they can run and climb around. Never try to pull a crab from its shell as it will hold on for dear life and will get pulled apart and killed.

Books

May we suggest buying one of our fine books on land hermit crabs for more information on specific facts, handling, and care of your new pet.

Supplies checklist

- fish tank
- glass or screen and glass top
- under-tank heater
- thermometer
- flat water dish with sponge and/or climbing branch
- gravel or calcium sand
- shells of different sizes
- climbing branches made for crabs and coral
- small flat food dish
- land hermit crab food
- calcium supplement (oyster shells/cuttlebone/eggshell)
- mister