

Care & Information Sheet

Hermit Crab



Hermit crabs are scavengers that will eat almost anything. They are nocturnal and generally live in large groups in the wild. They will do best in groups of three or more. They are called “hermits” because of the shell they carry on their back that they hide in when sensing danger. The average size is 2-6 inches long depending on the species and they usually molt once or twice a year by burying themselves in the sand; do not disturb during this process as the crab is very fragile. With proper care and nutrition they can live 10 or more years. If a hermit crab grabs you with a claw, lightly mist the shell with warm water or return it to the habitat. Once safely back in the habitat, the crab should release you.

Habitat

- A glass aquarium or a crab shack critter keeper. In general the tank should be at least 1 ½ gallons per 1 inch of crab.
- Always provide new shells that should be a bit bigger than the current shell.
- Hermit crabs like to climb and hide so be sure to provide climbing materials and hiding areas.
- Substrate – Sand or forest bedding, at least 3 inches deep.
- Humidity – No less than 70-80% (to keep gills moist, prevent dehydration and ease molting)
- Temperature – Range from 70° - 80°F

Food & Water

- High quality commercial hermit crab food. Crush all pelleted food before feeding and feed your hermits at night.
- Treats include any non-citrus fruits such as coconut, mangoes and papayas, vegetables such as spinach, romaine lettuce and carrots. Nuts, seaweed, brine shrimp and fish food flakes can also be given.
- Always wash fruits and vegetables prior to feeding them to your hermit crab as this removes pesticides and chemicals.
- Provide carotene (found in most red, orange or yellow vegetables) and calcium supplements such as cuttlebone.
- Water – Keep two shallow dishes of water in the habitat at all times. One with fresh, de-chlorinated water and one with salt water. The water should not be any deeper than ¼ - ½ inch – any deeper and your hermit crab could drown. A sponge can be placed in the dish to help your crab climb in and out.

Maintenance

- Check humidity daily; replace the water and clean the sponges (if used) with clean, de-chlorinated water daily.
- Remove uneaten food and debris from substrate daily.
- Clean entire habitat once a month.
- Bathe hermit crabs every week in a non-metal container with fresh, lukewarm, de-chlorinated water (remember to keep the water level very low) immerse the crab upside down and let it right itself or put the crab in the container and let it walk around. When the bath is done, remove the crab, drain the water out of its shell and place it in a secure area with paper towels to dry off. Don't put a wet crab back into the habitat as the substrate will stick to them and they will be dirty again.

Supplies

Habitat	Two Water Dishes	Water Conditioner
Sand or Forest Bedding	Food Dish	Extra Shells
Climbing Toys	Quality Food	Humidity/Thermometer Gauge
Hiding Place	Sponge	Book about Hermit Crabs

Health

Because hermit crabs are potential carriers of infectious diseases and salmonella, always wash your hands before and after handling your hermit crabs and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of diseases.

If you notice any of the following signs, check habitat temperature and humidity levels, ensure habitat is clean and water and food is available. If everything appears OK you should consult with an exotic animal veterinarian for advice.

- Listlessness
- Abandon's shell and does not return
- Loss of appetite
- Avoid overcrowding as this can cause stress.
- If mites appear in the habitat or directly on the crab, completely clean habitat and habitat contents in hot water; replace substrate, bathe crab in lukewarm water, ensure no mites are visible on the crab before returning to clean habitat.

For information regarding hermit crabs and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets>

NOTE: The information contained in this document is for general reference only. Please consult a veterinarian for medical advice and concerns.

Sources: *Hermit Crabs for Dummies* by Kelli A. Wilkins