

FREE SAMPLE

# Tarantula Care Package

The first 5 pages of the 44-page printable manual, free to keep.



**In this sample:** What's inside, How to Use This Package, Quick Profile, Cost Overview. The contents page shows every one of the 44 pages, so you can see exactly what the full package covers before you buy it.

**Not in this sample:** the 39 pages that follow, which are the full care guide, the health section, the quick reference cards, and the owner tools, checklists and logs.

**The full package** is \$8.99 at [beastlyfacts.com/care-packages/tarantula/](https://beastlyfacts.com/care-packages/tarantula/). One purchase, and every corrected edition is a free re-download from your library. The free tarantula care guide it was built from is at [beastlyfacts.com/guides/tarantula/](https://beastlyfacts.com/guides/tarantula/), and stays free.

## CONTENTS

# What's inside

Every page is written to be used, not just read once.

## GETTING STARTED

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| How to Use This Package | 3 |
|-------------------------|---|

## SECTION 01 · QUICK PROFILE

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Quick Profile | 4 |
| Cost Overview | 5 |

## SECTION 02 · FULL CARE GUIDE

|                                           |    |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| Enclosure: Shape, Size & the Lid          | 6  |
| Substrate, Hide & Furnishing by Type      | 7  |
| Temperature, Humidity & Ventilation       | 8  |
| Water, and What Actually Kills Tarantulas | 9  |
| Diet & Feeding by Life Stage              | 10 |
| Prey Chart & the Never-Feed List          | 11 |
| Why a Tarantula Stops Eating              | 12 |
| Molting: the Cycle                        | 13 |
| Molting: What to Do and Never Do          | 14 |
| Handling: Why the Answer Is No            | 15 |
| What Interacting Actually Looks Like      | 16 |
| Urticating Hairs, Bites & Your Own Safety | 17 |
| Rehousing: When & How to Prepare          | 18 |
| Rehousing: the Method                     | 19 |
| Common Mistakes                           | 20 |
| Enrichment: What the One Study Says       | 21 |

## SECTION 03 · HEALTH & COMMON ISSUES

|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| Health Red Flags                         | 22 |
| What Isn't a Red Flag, and Finding a Vet | 23 |
| Dehydration & Falls                      | 24 |
| Molt Complications, Mites & Mold         | 25 |
| Nematodes, DKS & Pesticides              | 26 |
| Sexing, Growth & Lifespan                | 27 |
| Where Tarantulas Are Not Legal           | 28 |

## SECTION 04 · QUICK REFERENCE

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Setup Checklist & Targets      | 29 |
| Emergency & Quick Targets Card | 30 |

## SECTION 05 · OWNER TOOLS

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Budget & Shopping List            | 31 |
| First 30 Days Checklist           | 32 |
| Symptom Quick Reference           | 33 |
| Daily, Weekly & Seasonal Routine  | 34 |
| Power Outages & the Blackout Plan | 35 |
| Travel, Transport & Moving        | 36 |
| Pet-Sitter Sheet                  | 37 |
| Owner Log                         | 38 |
| Acquisition & Molt Log            | 39 |
| Equipment & Maintenance Log       | 40 |
| Enrichment Checklist & Log        | 41 |

## REFERENCE

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Glossary                | 42 |
| Sources                 | 43 |
| Version History & About | 44 |

## START HERE

# How to use this package

Three ways to get value from it, depending on where you are right now.

## If you haven't set up yet

Read pages 4 through 9 before buying anything, and read page 28 before you buy the spider. The enclosure decision is the one that kills tarantulas: an enclosure taller than it is wide gives a heavy-bodied spider somewhere to fall from, and a fall ruptures an abdomen. Get the shape right, get the substrate deep, and put a water dish in from day one. Then use the Budget & Shopping List on page 31.

## If your tarantula is already set up

Go to the Setup Checklist on page 29 and audit what you have, paying particular attention to fall height and substrate depth. If your spider has stopped eating, do not panic: go to page 12 first, because in this species a refused meal is usually normal rather than a symptom. If it has a shrivelled abdomen or is sitting with its legs curled beneath it, that is the genuine emergency, and it is page 24.

## Print these first

- |                                                                    |                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page 29: Setup Checklist & Targets        | <input type="checkbox"/> Page 37: Pet-Sitter Sheet           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page 30: Emergency & Quick Targets Card   | <input type="checkbox"/> Page 38: Owner Log                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page 33: Symptom Quick Reference          | <input type="checkbox"/> Page 39: Acquisition & Molt Log     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Page 34: Daily, Weekly & Seasonal Routine | <input type="checkbox"/> Page 41: Enrichment Checklist & Log |

### WHY THIS PACKAGE EXISTS

Tarantula keeping is refreshingly simple and unusually easy to get wrong in a few specific ways, most of them invisible until the spider is dead. It is also a hobby with very little veterinary backstop, which puts more weight on husbandry than on treatment. This package sets out what is actually known, including the single controlled housing study on page 21 reported with its unflattering findings intact, cross-checked against the sources listed on page 43.

### BUY THE SPECIES, NOT THE LOOK

Ask the seller what the species is, in Latin, and look up its type before you buy the enclosure. "Tarantula" covers animals with genuinely incompatible needs, and a shop selling a fossorial baboon spider in a shallow display tank is not a reliable guide.

### NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR

An exotics vet who treats invertebrates, where one exists. Many areas simply do not have one, which is the honest situation and the reason this book leans hard on prevention. Find out now whether anyone within reach will see a tarantula, and write it on page 30. Experienced keeper communities are the realistic second line, and they are genuinely useful, but they are not a diagnosis.

## SECTION 01

# Quick profile

Everything at a glance before you read the detail.

|                   |                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family            | Theraphosidae, over 900 species on every continent except Antarctica                                               |
| Adult size        | 2 to 12 in (5 to 30 cm) leg span depending on species. A Chilean rose hair sits around 4.5 to 5.5 in (11 to 14 cm) |
| Lifespan          | Females commonly 15 to 20 years or more. Males typically 4 to 7 years total, because they stop molting at maturity |
| Native range      | Tropics and subtropics worldwide. Desert, grassland, rainforest floor, and canopy depending on the species         |
| Diet type         | Obligate carnivore, ambush predator, live insect prey only. No formulated diet exists (page 10)                    |
| Enclosure minimum | About 3× the leg span in floor width, roughly 20×10×10 in (50×25×25 cm) for an adult, and horizontal               |
| The one hard rule | Keep it low. Height is the danger, floor area is the benefit, and a fall ruptures an abdomen (page 6)              |
| Housing           | One per enclosure. Most species are solitary and cannibalistic, and no enclosure size fixes that                   |
| Handling          | Strictly look, don't touch. The risk runs in both directions (pages 15 and 17)                                     |
| Legal status      | Legal in most of the US, banned in a handful of places. Check page 28 before you buy                               |
| Conservation      | Varies. Many species are CITES Appendix II, some are Endangered. Buy captive-bred                                  |

## SECTION 01

# Cost overview

A tarantula is arguably the cheapest long-lived exotic pet there is. The commitment is measured in years, not dollars.

## Cost overview

### Initial setup

\$70 to \$300 for the enclosure, substrate, hide, water dish and tongs, plus \$25 to \$100 for the spider. A Chilean rose hair or curly hair is usually \$20 to \$50, and slings cost less than adults.

### Ongoing

\$5 to \$15 a month, essentially all of it feeder insects, so roughly \$60 to \$180 a year. There is no pet insurance for tarantulas and very little routine vet cost.

### THE REAL NUMBER TO SIT WITH

Not the money, the years. A female is a 15 to 20 year commitment and sometimes longer, on a budget most pets would spend in a month. This is arguably the cheapest long-lived exotic pet there is, which makes the time commitment the thing to think through properly before buying, rather than the price.

## Fun facts worth knowing

- They digest food outside their bodies. A tarantula injects enzymes through its fangs to liquefy the prey's insides, then a muscular sucking stomach pumps the liquid meal in, leaving the empty exoskeleton behind as a small pellet called a bolus.
- Females never stop molting. Most invertebrates stop once they mature; a female tarantula keeps shedding for life, which is a large part of why she outlives a male three or four times over.
- Their blood is not contained. Hemolymph flows freely through the body cavity and bathes the organs directly rather than running in vessels, which is exactly why even a moderate abdominal rupture turns fatal so fast (page 24).