

# Pet Scorpions

## An Introductory Information Leaflet



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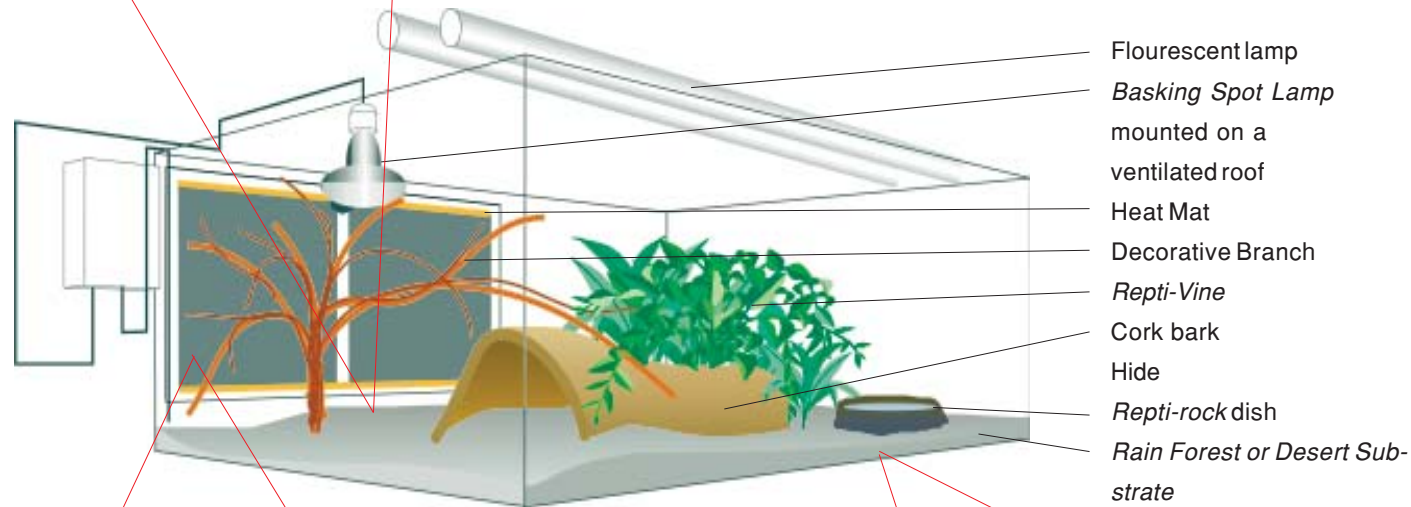
### Hot Spot

A local area of higher temperature may be created, if needed, with a Spot lamp. The *Spot Lamp* should be used in conjunction with a *HabiStat Dimming* thermostat for precise control. Hot spots should be maintained for the same day length as the lights, fourteen in summer, ten in winter. Small cages will not need a hot spot.

**Cleanliness and Hygiene:** The cage will need cleaning out but only infrequently. A routine cleaner for all nonporous surfaces would be *Vetaclene*, followed by a thorough rinse. All other materials should be replaced when soiled. Any first aid the scorpion may be need, can be given by dabbing the wound with *Vetadine*. As far as human hygiene is concerned, *Vetasept Surgical Scrub* will clean hands and surfaces while *Vetasept Hand Rub* will allow adequate cleansing and disinfection even in cases when water is unavailable.

### Lighting

Scorpions usually shun bright lights, so artificial light in the cage must be subdued. Often, just the daylight filtering in will be enough. If more light is needed, a small fluorescent tube could be installed. An interesting display can be made with a *Black Light*, as these will make the scorpion fluoresce an eery green!



- Flourescent lamp
- Basking Spot Lamp mounted on a ventilated roof
- Heat Mat
- Decorative Branch
- Repti-Vine
- Cork bark
- Hide
- Repti-rock dish
- Rain Forest or Desert Substrate

A cage suitable for a scorpion

### Background Heat

Use a heat mat between half and two thirds the size of the cage to provide background heating. The hottest spot in the cage should not be above 35°C while the coolest should not be below 20°C. Use a *HabiStat Mat-Stat* if the temperature is too hot but put the whole cage in a cooler place if the temperature is not cool enough.

**Food:** Crickets, Locusts, Mealworms, and as a special treat Waxworms. Choose insects of an appropriate size. Supplement livefoods by feeding *Cricket Diet Plus* or *Mealworm Diet Plus*. Water should be fresh and changed every couple of days. For small specimens, fill the dish with a cotton wool plug to prevent drowning.

### Cage Set Up

The cage should be set up to allow an active scorpion plenty of scope to climb, burrow, warm in a hot spot, move to a cooler place and hunt for food. The scorpions should also be able to secrete themselves into refuges and lay protected when shedding their skin.

## Shopping List

Not every thing is needed to begin with, usually one item from each of the categories marked •. As a basic starting point the following essentials are considered the minimum needed:

**Plastic Cage**  
**Heat Mat**  
**Rain Forest Substrate**  
**Repti-rock dish**  
**Thermometer**  
**Repti-Vine**  
**Piece of Cork Bark**

- **HabiStat, Heat Mats**  
(6x11/7w, 11x11/12w, 17x11/20w, 23x11/28w, 29x11/35w, 35x11/42w & 49x11/55w) & **Strips**  
(17x6/10w, 23x6/15w, 35x6/22w & 47x6/30w)
- **Thermometers** (Alcohol, dial, minimum - maximum & electronic digital)
- **Hygrometers** (Dial & electronic digital)
- **HabiStat Thermostats**  
(Mat-Stat/100w, Temperature/300w, Twin/2x300, Pulse Proportional/600w, Dimming/600w & Night Time Drop Function)
- **Sun Switch, Moon Switch & Night Eye**
- **Repti-rock Dishes, Hides & Caves**
- **Plastic Plants**
- **Rain Forest Substrate Vermiculite Desert Substrate**
- **Cork Bark**
- **Activa Professional Lights** (18"/15w, 24"/18w)
- **Black Lights** (18"/15w, 24"/20W)
- **Arcadia Control Units** (15w, 2x15w, 18w, 2x18w, 20w & 2x20w)
- **Crickets**
- **Locusts**
- **Mealworms**
- **Waxworms**
- **Vetaclean**
- **Vetasept Surgical Scrub**
- **Vetasept Hand Rub**
- **Hand Spray**
- **Books & Leaflets**



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## Pet Scorpions...

### ...Biology

Scorpions are arachnids and so are related to spiders. They are carnivorous animals coming mainly from tropical climates. They have a pair of crab like pincers and a sting at the end of the tail.

The sting of pet scorpions, however, is surprisingly mild. Very few inject a venom that is dangerous to people, the worst that usually happens is the wound is about as painful as a bee or wasp sting. The good news is that the pain rarely lasts as long! In fact, less than 2% of all scorpions are lethal.

A few species are available as pets. Only safe species are sold by reputable pet stores. These include the large black, damp loving *Pandinus* and *Heterometrus* species from Africa and Asia and the smaller desert species *Scorpio maurus* from Egypt. Other species that may be encountered are the yellow Hairy Scorpions, *Hadrurus spp.*, from the USA and the chocolate coloured Chilean *Bothriurus spp.*

As the scorpion grows it will moult its outer skin periodically. The first signs are often a refusal of food and increased aggressiveness. On no account should it be touched or interfered with. It will cast off the old skin and the emerged scorpion will often have regrown any legs that have been shed. The scorpion may take a day or two to harden off, during which time it will not feed.

### ...Housing

The permanent cage need not be large, about 33 cm x 21 cm x 13 cm being about the average dimensions for an animal with a body length of 10 cm. The cage should be set up in a manner similar to the diagram overleaf. A heater should be installed to provide a background temperature of between 20°C and 30°C. This is best done with an *HabiStat* mat or strip taped to the inside of the back wall of a wooden cage or either side if the wall is glass or plastic. Make sure the mat acts like a radiator, so very little of it should be below the line of the substrate. It may be necessary to provide a local hot spot near 38°C, while the coolest part of the cage should be nearer 25°C. This heat source should be comparatively low powered to protect the animals from being burnt. The hot spot should only operate during the day for about fourteen hours in summer dropping to twelve in winter. A *HabiStat* controlled *Basking Spot Lamp* would provide heat for a larger cage.

Small specimens are best kept in small cages or jars. To heat these small enclosures, keep them in a warm atmosphere or stand several on a heating mat or strip. Obviously the correct temperature range must be kept, so some experimenting must be done.

Much of the success achieved in keeping scorpions will come from the skilful manipulation of ventilation. Some of these animals require high humidity others like it much dryer but none can stand stagnant conditions. Fresh air moving into the cage is essential. Use the upward draughts caused by heated air rising to flush out the cage and drag fresh air in. A light misting with a hand sprayer will provide the 40% to 80% humidity required. Some species will require the substrate to be damp but not wringing wet. Look in the literature for details of the particular species being kept.

### ...Husbandry

Most species are best kept singly but the large black *Pandinus* species may be kept in groups. Many will want to hide for most of the day so shelters should feature in the cage design.

These animals do not really like being handled, so if it is necessary to move them, coax them into a box that can be closed afterwards and then carry the scorpion enclosed.

In time the cage will begin to look scruffy as faeces and debris builds up. As everything recommended for the cage is washable or disposable, a good clean out is easily done. The cage set up advised in this leaflet is practicable and can be made to look pleasing to the eye. It can be made to look quite natural even without using live plants which are best left until some experience is gained. In any case, some of the very informative books on Arachnids in general and scorpions in particular could be investigated.

### ...Food & Feeding

Insects like crickets and locusts form the staple diet in captivity. Mealworms can also be fed. Other insects that are eaten include Maggots and Waxworms but these are best given only to small and medium sized specimens.

Food is sensed by movement and smell, then grabbed with the pincers. If it puts up too much of a struggle it is dispatched with an injection of venom from the sting. A pair of chelicerae then tare off pieces and chew them up. The food is then consumed by the scorpion through the mouth.

Feed the scorpions about every week with enough to be eaten in about an hour. Do not to leave an excess of uneaten insects in the cage as these will only annoy the scorpions.

A small water dish kept full of fresh water should always be available. To stop small specimens drowning, a cotton wool pad is often placed in the water dish, which is kept wet and offers the scorpions a safe drink.

### ...Reproduction

To sex a scorpion an adult specimen is usually required. The males are slimmer more leggy animals that usually have proportionately longer tails. They also have larger more feathery pectines. These are paired, comb like sensory organs on the underside of the chest area.

Live young are produced and are usually protected by the female. To grow to adult in captivity may take as short a time as a year but in the wild, a few years may elapse.

### ...Health & Disease

Scorpions live for many years in nature but as many will already be adult when purchased, no real estimate of life expectancy as pets can be made. They do not suffer from many diseases and veterinary attention is rarely needed. An environment and diet as described in this leaflet will preclude most problems. Good practice, hygiene and first aid will probably deal with rest. If real disease or injury is discovered, a vet must of course, be consulted. Pet scorpions do not pose a real threat to human health. All the normal hygiene precautions regarding humans and animals should, however, be observed.