

Is this the right pet for me?

Keeping Australian scorpions can be a fascinating and educational experience and provides an excellent talking point in your lounge room. They make a wonderful live exhibit, allowing unforgettable close encounters with these amazing living relics, which have hardly changed for more than 400 million years.

Several species of Australian scorpions are becoming widely available as pets. Scorpions require limited space, are relatively inexpensive to keep and are very hardy if set up correctly. Although venomous, Australian scorpions are not considered dangerous to humans, unlike some overseas species. They are rarely seen in the wild as they are nocturnal living in rocks or sandy burrows or deep under bark during the day. Specific care requirements depend on the natural habitat of your scorpion, which can range from dry sandy deserts or temperate forests to tropical rainforests.

Recommended for...

- People with limited time
- Older children or teenagers
- Apartment dwellers

Lifespan

5-15 years depending on the species.

NEW SCORPION CHECKLIST

Here is a list of essentials you'll need for your new Scorpion. Please ask any of the Best Friends team to help you with your selections.

Essential equipment

- Terrarium or aquarium
- Substrate material for the floor
- Assortment of flat rocks and pieces of bark for shelter
- Small water sponge
- Spray bottle for misting the enclosure substrate

Special Offer:

Caring for your Scorpion



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Housing

Your scorpion is best housed individually although some species can be kept in pairs or small groups. Scorpions need to be housed in an enclosed terrarium or glass tank, with a minimum base area of 20 x 30 cm, and a height of 20 cm. As they cannot climb smooth glass or plastic walls, enclosures do not necessarily need a lid. The floor should be covered to a minimum depth of 3cm with a solid substrate material such as granite sand, except for rainforest scorpions which need a substrate of coco-peat or sphagnum moss. Depending on the species of scorpion you may need to maintain a damp end and a dry end or keep the whole enclosure dry or moist. Fit out the enclosure with flats rocks or bark for shelters. Most species like to be kept at an ambient temperature of 18-24C, except for the tropical rainforest scorpion, which should be kept at 24-28C. Most species of scorpion like an ambient humidity of 40-60%, but rainforest scorpions prefer 60-80% humidity. All scorpions are nocturnal and dislike bright light, so keep their house away from windows and don't use any artificial lighting. If you want more light to view your scorpion, use a dim red light so that they will still behave normally.



Routine Care

Each day, ensure that the scorpion's water sponge is moist. For those species that need a damp substrate, mist the substrate with water each day, either at one end, or the entire enclosure, depending on your scorpion's specific requirements.

Feeding

Scorpions capture their prey using their large pincers (pedipalps). They kill their prey by using these pincers to crush and the sting on the end of their tail to inject it with venom. In the wild, scorpions eat small live insects, spiders and other scorpions. Your scorpion should be fed by introducing one live cricket or cockroach into their enclosure each week. Remove any dead or uneaten insects, as scorpions may not eat every time food is offered. Watching your scorpion emerge from its burrow at night to hunt and ambush its insect prey can be a fascinating experience.

Handling

Handling scorpions is relatively easy if the right tools and methods are used, but be aware that most species are capable of giving you a painful sting if handled incorrectly. The easiest way to move a scorpion is to usher it into a small plastic container by gently prompting with a padded implement. If it is necessary, you can safely pick up a scorpion with a pair of padded forceps, gripping the

scorpion gently by the end of its tail. You can make your own padded forceps by attaching some self-adhesive foam to the tips of your forceps. Being gentle is very important, as any damage to the scorpion's external shell can kill it.

The friendly staff at Best Friend Pet SuperCentre will be happy to talk to you about any concerns you have about setting up and caring for your scorpion.

Other sources of information

"Bugs Alive – A guide to keeping Australian invertebrates", by Alan Henderson, Deanna Henderson and Jessie Sinclair, published by Museum Victoria 2008.

