

# Care Sheet



**LIVING  
SCIENCE**

Education Service Center, Region 20

210-370-5688

[www.esc20.net](http://www.esc20.net)

[livingscience2esc20.net](http://livingscience2esc20.net)

## Tarantula

The Chilean rose tarantula (*Grammostola rosea*) is probably one of the most common species of tarantula found in the Americas. The Chilean rose tarantula originates from the northern Atacama Desert region of Chile, which is one of the driest deserts on earth. These tarantulas are relatively docile, quite low maintenance and also very beautiful which makes them an aesthetically pleasing display critter.

An adult will reach maturity in less than two years and rarely get larger than five or six inches in diameter. Females have been known to live as long as 20 years, while male only live 3 to 4 years.

### DIET:

Tarantulas prey on small insects and other spiders: in captivity crickets are usually the best food. An occasional mealworm or superworm make a nice treat as well. However, it is not uncommon for tarantulas to go without eating for a month or more. Tarantulas are mostly nocturnal creatures and prey at night.

### HABITAT:

The tarantulas are kept in an appropriate sized *KITTER KEEPER* with coconut fiber substrate, a hide and a water dish. Fresh water should always be accessible to spider (tap water may be used). A Fresh cotton ball or a balled-up paper towel can be placed in the dish for easy access.

### BEHAVIOUR:

Tarantulas have a few different defense mechanisms as an alternate to biting, which is normally a last resort for this species. If the tarantula happens to feel threatened in anyway, it will usually try to get away, which entails bolting into their hide/burrow. The next defense they will use is striking a “threat pose”. This is when the tarantula holds its front legs in the air and exposing its fangs. Last but not least, the tarantula will use its back legs to flick the urticating hairs off their abdomen. These hairs are barbed and can

# Care Sheet

work their way into the skin, nose, and mouth causing irritation, swelling and in a worse-case-scenario they may cause significant damage if they were to get into the eyes.

## **HANDLING:**

It is best to only handle a tarantula if you are confident in doing so.

**Tarantulas are very fragile and subject to stress.** Please wash hands with soap and water after handling.

For this species and other easy-to-handle tarantulas, place a flat hand in front of the spider and gently touch the back legs until the tarantula eases onto your hand. After gaining a little practice and familiarity, this is also the safest and easiest means of showing a tarantula to others. If a spider escapes or won't sit still, cup both hands over, or if you are not comfortable in doing so placing a deli cup over it is fine too; the tarantula will normally quiet down quickly in this dark, tight position.

## **MOLTING:**

In arthropods, molting is the shedding of the exoskeleton, typically to let the organism to continue to grow. This process is called ecdysis. Ecdysis is necessary because the exoskeleton is rigid and cannot grow like skin. A tarantula may become immobile for a period before molting. The new exoskeleton is initially soft but hardens a day or two after molting.