

Land Hermit Crab

Species: *clypeatus*
Genus: *Coenobita*
Family: Coenobitidae
Order: Decapoda
Class: Malacostraca
Phylum: Arthropoda
Kingdom: Animalia



Conditions for Customer Ownership

We hold permits allowing us to transport these organisms. To access permit conditions, [click here](#)

Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.

There are currently no USDA requirements for land hermit crabs. Do not release these organisms into the environment.

Primary Hazard Considerations

Be careful when handling your hermit crab as they are both delicate and can pinch! Never stick your fingers in or near your hermit crab's claws. To hold them, gently pick them up by the shell and place them in an open palm. Be sure not to let them fall from any height. Even a drop of a couple of feet to a table can rupture their soft internal organs. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling.

Availability

Hermit crabs are generally available year-round from our live materials lab. They are wild collected from Florida. Hermit crabs can survive in this container for about an hour or two, but it is preferable if they are immediately taken out of the shipping container and placed in their new habitat. Do not mistake your new hermit crabs for unhealthy or dead if they display little movement when they first arrive; this is normal and expected behavior due to their long trip. Hermit crabs are about one to two inches long. They can have shells of all different shapes, sizes, and colors.

Captive Care

Habitat:

- Each hermit crab should have about one gallon of space, so a 5-gallon glass tank will comfortably house five hermit crabs. The bottom of the container should be covered with 2–3 inches with a substrate such as Sand 45 W 1988, or [shredded coconut fiber](#). You should keep your container covered because hermit crabs like to climb and will escape if given the opportunity. They need to be kept at 70–85°F (20 to 29°C). An [under tank heater](#) is an ideal way to control the temperature. Add branches and rocks, so that the hermit crabs are able to climb around and explore. Hermit crabs breathe using gills, so it's always important to keep your hermit crab's tank moist and humid. Spraying the tank at least once a day with non-chlorinated water or including a wet sponge will allow the tank to stay humid.

Care:

- Hermit crabs are omnivores, so they eat both animal and plant matter. They enjoy premixed [Hermit Crab Food 88 W 0612](#) as well as grocery store items like canned or dry dog food, apples, bananas, lettuce, and peanut butter to name a few. Be sure to provide non-chlorinated water (fresh bottled or water that is de-chlorinated). Offer the water in a shallow dish to prevent drowning. [Stress Coat 21 W 2338](#) can be used to de-chlorinate water. They enjoy having a bath at least once a month. This can be done by placing some room temperature (64 to 70°F) non-chlorinated water in a shallow pan or tank with high sides. Just place your crabs in the water and let them play around for about ten to fifteen minutes. A dish of salt water in their habitat can also help them maintain their body's salinity levels.



Information

- Method of reproduction: Sexual. They can only reproduce in the wild because the female must lay her eggs in the ocean after mating on land.
- Determining sex: Sex can only be determined if the hermit crab leaves its shell. Females have two genital openings called gonopores which are located under the first back pair of walking legs. The gonopores are often difficult to see. Do not attempt to remove your hermit crab from its shell to determine its sex. Doing so can injure or even result in the death of your hermit crab.

Life Cycle

It takes around 30 days for the hermit crabs to hatch out of their aquatic eggs; then they become aquatic larvae. The hermit crab larvae become adults in about 40–60 days after going through several molts, and move to land. Once on land they find a shell which is usually from different mollusks, such as snails and even other hermit crabs, to protect their fragile abdomens. An adult will molt several more times and change shells as it grows. It may choose an empty shell or attempt to chase another hermit crab out of its shell. A hermit crab can live up to 20 years in captivity, but on average they only live two to three years.

Wild Habitat

In the wild, hermit crabs can be found on shorelines of sub-tropical areas from the Florida Keys south through the West Indies and even into parts of South America. They are nocturnal animals and spend their days hiding either buried in sand or in driftwood. They are also arboreal and like to climb trees. They mainly scavenge for dead plant and animal matter. The main predators of hermit crabs are other crabs and birds.

Special Notes

Land hermit crabs communicate with one another by making croaking or chirping sounds by rubbing against their shell or rubbing their body parts together. They are very social animals and often travel in groups of up to one hundred crabs.

Disposition

- We do not recommend releasing any laboratory animal into the wild, and especially not invertebrates that are not native to the environment.
- Adoption is the preferred disposition of a hermit crab.
- If the animal cannot be adopted by a capable owner, it may be surrendered to your local humane society.
- If the animal must be euthanized, please do so by placing it in the freezer for 24 hours.
- A deceased specimen should be disposed of as soon as possible. Consult your school's recommendations for disposal. In general, a dead hermit crab should be handled with gloves, wrapped in something absorbent (like newspaper) then wrapped again in an opaque plastic bag that is sealed (tied tightly) and placed in a general garbage container away from students.