

Care guide

Palm Katydid (*Segestidea queenslandica*)



Palm Katydids are one of the largest species of katydids found in Australia. They are found in the rainforests north Queensland, where they live in association with native palms. They feed primarily on *Calamus* spp. (Lawyer Vines – Wait-a-whiles) particularly *C.australis* and *C.muelleri*, however they will enter gardens and feed on a wide variety of palms, both native and exotic.

Palm Katydids spend the daylight hours motionless, usually lying flat on the underside of palm fronds or along the stems. Their slender long body and low profile gives them excellent camouflage. As juveniles, their colour varies from fawn brown through to mottled green which assists them to merge with the plant material. They are also quite hairy as juveniles, but lose this upon maturity. Adults are fully winged, and brown (pictured above). They look very much like old dried palm fronds. They are active at night and feed upon the green palm foliage, but generally do not move about significantly.

These katydids are quite unique in that they are parthenogenetic and the majority of specimens in the wild are female. Very few males are ever encountered, and only a few specimens have ever been collected. When males are present and mate with females, mixed sex offspring will result. Unmated females will produce fertile female offspring only. Their eggs are laid into the ground below suitable food plants. The resultant young hatch out looking like miniature versions of their parents, and begin feeding within the first 24 hours of life. Like other arthropods they shed their exoskeletons periodically in order to develop and grow.

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Food: Fresh cut palm fronds or potted palms. Some of the most available species that are suitable as food plants are Golden Cane Palm (*Dypsis lutescens*), Lady Palm (*Rhapis excelsa*), Alexandra Palm (*Archontophoenix alexandrae*) and the Bangalow Palm (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*).

Water: Mist spray the enclosure once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp and the humidity high. The katydids will drink from the moisture on the foliage and branches.

Enclosure: The enclosure needs to be a minimum of 35 cm H x 25cm W x 20 cm D to adequately house 1 or 2 adults. A larger enclosure will be required for more specimens. The base of the enclosure can be covered in a substrate of coco-peat (available from garden supply shops) to a depth of at least 8cm. While substrate of this type is not essential, it will accommodate breeding. Sticks and branches should be placed within the enclosure as they are required for the insects to hang from whilst moulting.

Temperature: This species will do best at 24° – 28°C, but will tolerate 16 – 24°C and have a slower growth rate.

Life span: About one year.

Handling: These katydids have powerful mandibles, but are quite timid and are reluctant biters. They can be handled but are unpredictable and may leap away without warning.

Reproduction: These katydids can be housed in groups as long as there is sufficient perching space for all specimens. At present there are no males in captivity within Australia, so all captive populations are pathogenetic – females only. Breeding in this species is relatively simple as a result. Providing adult females with a moist substrate is usually enough to stimulate egg deposition. Eggs usually hatch after several months' incubation; however incubation periods are highly dependant on the temperature at which they are incubated.

Common issues: If using potted palms ensure the nursery or supplier has not treated the plants with a pesticide.

NOTE: These animals are captive bred, and should not be released into the wild.

For more information contact Minibeast Wildlife at info@minibeastwildlife.com.au