



## CARE GUIDE



# CAVE HUNTSMAN

*Yiinthi chillagoe*



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# CAVE HUNTSMAN

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## PROFILE

Cave Huntsmen are large, long-legged hunters, one of many similar species found in cavernous habitats throughout Australia. This species is found in northern Australia in the Chillagoe region. They are common in the cave systems in that area, but are also found in rocky outcrops and also in large concrete drainage culverts beneath the roads of the region. They have often been observed feeding on cave crickets (Macropathini) but most likely feed on a wide range of invertebrates including moths, cockroaches and other spiders.

Like other huntsman, these spiders are extremely fast, and have the ability to run sideways and squeeze into very narrow crevices. They are covered in fine sensory hairs which are extremely sensitive to air movement. This assists them in detecting the movement of prey and the approach of predators. They will readily leap off rock surfaces to take prey in mid-air or upon adjacent rock surfaces.

This species lays its eggs encased within a very flattened white silk egg sac attached to a rock surface. They usually secure this in a protected place such as a rock crevice or beneath large fallen rocks and stay with their eggs until after they hatch. The young emerge around 30 days after being laid (they will develop slower in cool conditions), and several hundred very small spiderlings may emerge from a single egg sac. The spiderlings will cluster around their mother for a week or two after they emerge and will tolerate each other during this stage. Once they disperse any chance meetings of the siblings will often result in one eating the other.

These spiders grow by shedding their outer skeleton (exoskeleton). This process is called ecdysis or moulting. To moult successfully they need to hang uninterrupted from line attached to a secure surface above them. They usually will not feed for about 24 hours after moulting. Males and females can be identified as they mature; males have enlarged bulbs on the ends of their pedipalps (feelers) which females lack, and males tend to have thin bodies and longer legs.

## FOOD

Live insects. Crickets, cockroaches, moths and flies are ideal. The food insects should be no larger than 1/3 of the size of your spider. Feeding twice a week is recommended, but young spiders will feed more often when they are growing. Remove live insects from your enclosure if your spider has not eaten them within 12 hours.

## WATER

Mist spray lightly around your spider every second day – it will drink the droplets.

## ENCLOSURE

The enclosure needs to be large enough to allow your spider to shed its exoskeleton properly. An ideal enclosure should be higher than it is wide, as Cave Huntsmen like to climb upwards. Minibeast Wildlife's pop-up mesh enclosures or tall acrylic enclosures are ideal. Add flat pieces of bark set at vertical or diagonal angles to your enclosure to give the spider something to climb on and hide behind. Ensure the enclosure is not placed in direct sunlight as this may cause it to overheat. Make sure there is plenty of ventilation in your enclosure but ensure there are no gaps which allow the spider to get out.

## CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Remove any food waste that has fallen to the bottom of the enclosure.

## SUBSTRATE

Not essential, but you can use leaf litter or coco-peat to help soak up any excess moisture.

## HANDLING

Direct handling is not recommended. They are fast spiders and can be lost easily if free-handled. Human skin oils can also interfere with the spiders' foot hairs limiting their climbing ability. Although these spiders are not dangerously venomous and quite timid, adults do have large fangs and could give a painful bite. If you need to transfer them, they can be easily guided into a jar or plastic container.

## TEMPERATURE

The safe temperature zone for this species is 18° – 26°C, but will tolerate 8°– 30° for limited periods.

## COMMON ISSUES

Due to their flattened bodies and fast speed, these spiders are excellent escape artists! Ensure there are no gaps around the lid or doors of your enclosure, and take care not to allow your spider to run out when opening it.



60-80%



1-2 years life span



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

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