

## Care guide

### Semi-social Pygmy Tarantula (*Coremiocnemis* sp.)



Semi-social Pygmy Tarantulas are one of Australia's smallest known species and are found in the rainforests of tropical north eastern Australia. They live in burrows often using existing cracks and crevices such as gaps below rocks and logs rather than tunnelling directly into soil. Their burrows often consist of multiple silk tunnels as a result of the spider silk lining the entire space it occupies.

This species appears to be quite unique among Australia's tarantulas due to the extended parental care provided by the females. The spiderlings remain with the mother well exceeding the period of time exhibited in other Australian tarantula species. This behaviour has been observed in the wild and in captivity. Some young spiders have been recorded as remaining with their mother beyond 18 months at which stage some have reached fifth instar and a great variation in the size of young is present. During this period the young spiders will cooperatively feed and the mother assists by allowing them to feed from food parcels she is feeding on, and at times leave food which she has killed and partly mashed for them.

It is still not known to what extent this parental care continues and is the subject of further study. They do appear to live in clusters in the wild with many burrows close together, however their degree of tolerance towards other adults is not yet fully understood.

Like other Australian tarantulas, these spiders are ambush hunters that sit and wait for their food to approach them. They detect their prey through vibration both through the air and via the ground (and through their silk lined tunnels), and have relatively poor eyesight. They attack with burst of speed and impale their prey with their large fangs. They then drag it back into their retreat to consume it.

Mature males will leave the burrow or retreat in order to breed, wandering by night in search of females. Males are the sex most often encountered by people due to this seasonal wandering. Once mated, females will construct a small silk wrapped egg sac within the burrow, and guard it until hatching. They are capable of having around 50 offspring per, and can breed annually once mature.

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**Food:** Live or fresh dead insects. Crickets and cockroaches are ideal. Insects 1/3 of the size of your spider are an ideal size. Feeding once or 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 is not hungry.

**Water:** You can offer your spider a moist sponge within a dish (such as a bottle top) for water, however, if the substrate is kept moist the spider will rarely require additional water.

**Enclosure:** Despite their size, tarantulas do not require large enclosures. An adult can be housed comfortably in an enclosure with a floor space of 30cm x 30cm. Enclosures need to be secure, with secure lids. Glass or acrylic terrariums are ideal, and plastic storage tubs are also suitable. Ventilation is important, and any mesh used should be aluminium, as adult spiders can easily tear through fibreglass fly mesh.

Coco-peat is an ideal substrate, and ideally should have a moisture gradient (a dry end and moist end to the enclosure). This should be deep enough to allow your spider to create a retreat (several centimetres). Additional objects (bark etc) may be added to allow your spider to construct a retreat beneath them.

**Temperature:** These spiders will be most active at temperatures of 20 – 26°C, but will tolerate 10 – 20°C seasonally. They can tolerate temperatures below 10°C for brief periods, but avoid higher temperatures as heat stress can be lethal.

**Humidity:** To prevent dehydration, these spiders require relatively high humidity (60-80%). This can be maintained by keeping the substrate moist.

**Life span:** 5-10 years.

**Handling:** Direct handling is not recommended. Adults are heavy and a fall can easily injure them or kill them. Although these spiders are not dangerously venomous, 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.

**Important note:** The semi-social behaviour of this species relates to extended parental care. It is not advised to house multiple spiders together as this may result in cannibalism.

For additional information on this species visit [minibeastwildlife.com.au/the-semi-social-pygmy-tarantula-coremiocnemis/](http://minibeastwildlife.com.au/the-semi-social-pygmy-tarantula-coremiocnemis/)

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