

Care guide

Spitting Spider, *Dictis striatipes*



Spitting Spiders are small web-based hunters that are most active at night. There are several species within Australia, all quite similar in shape, size and behaviour. *Dictis striatipes* is found in the northern tropical regions of Australia and are visually different than most other species in that the females are a dark uniform colour compared to the light, banded appearance of others.

They are common in and around human dwellings in northern Australia, particularly in timber constructions and under eaves. In nature they are often found under bark and within cracks and hollows in trees.

Spitting Spiders create small funnel-like webs leading to a crack or crevice, with silken lines running out from the retreat. The web acts to trap and hinder the movement of prey and to alert the Spitting Spider of its presence. Once prey is detected the spider cautiously approaches and uses its long front legs to gauge the distance it is from it. Once within range the Spitting Spider activates its unique weapon – the ability to spit venom-laced silk, a liquid which congeals upon impact to a sticky mass. The action is super-fast, taking a mere 1/700th of a second.

Spitting Spiders create a loosely woven round egg sac which is held by the female using her chelicerae. The egg sac usually contains around 20 eggs and takes around three weeks to hatch. The spiderlings will cluster around the retreat for a short while before dispersing.

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Food: Small live insects; small crickets are ideal and should be smaller the body size of the spider. Pin-head crickets are excellent food for young Spitting Spiders. Vinegar flies, juvenile slaters and other small harmless invertebrates may also be used.

Water: Light mist spray the enclosure to maintain the humidity environment. While relatively high humidity is required, the enclosure should not be wet or have free water present.

Enclosure: As these spiders are very small, a small enclosure is best so that the spider is easy to find. Screw top food storage containers or jars are ideal. Ventilation holes need to be smaller than the spider or should be covered in mesh. While substrate is not essential, a moisture absorbent medium such as paper towel or coco-peat is useful to maintain humidity and soak up any excess water.

Enclosure furnishings should include items that present options for the spider to create a retreat inside. These are best secured in a vertical manner to allow the spider to climb up and create a retreat. Pieces of bark are ideal.

Temperature/humidity: The safe temperature range for this species is 18 – 26°C but will tolerate cooler conditions for limited periods. Cooler temperatures will result in a slower growth rate. Ideal humidity is 60-80%. Beware of overheating.

Life span: Around a year.

Handling: While these spiders are regarded as harmless to humans, handling is not recommended as they are quite delicate and can escape.

Important considerations: Ensure the enclosure does not become too damp and that food presented is not too big and doesn't intimidate the spider.

NOTE: These animals should not be released into the wild.

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