

## Care Guide

### Marbled Scorpion, *Lychas variatus*



These scorpions are found throughout mainland Australia and occur inland in dry areas as well as within coastal forests. It is a relatively small slender species with a marbled colouration and dark tips to the tail and dark bands on the claws and legs.

These scorpions are wandering hunters that stealthily move around after dark seeking out prey. Prey consists of other small invertebrates, often small spiders that the scorpions encounter. Their wandering habits often take them into houses where they are encountered by people. While they climb rough surfaces very well, they cannot climb smooth surfaces and are often found trapped in sinks and bathtubs as a result.

Like other scorpions this species is venomous, however their venom is only mild and they are not considered dangerous to humans. Prey is captured using their pincers (pedipalps), and then is stung to immobilise it before feeding. Feeding takes considerable time as the food needs to be torn and crushed by tiny claw-like mouthparts before being ingested.

Scorpions grow by shedding their outer skeleton (exoskeleton). This process is called ecdysis or moulting. They usually do this out of sight in a safe place, and will often moult at night. During the moulting process they are very vulnerable to attack from other animals and cannot defend themselves.

One incredible part of the life cycle of this species is the mating ritual. Male and female scorpions will lock pincers and perform a dance known as the 'promenade à deux'. During this ritual the male deposits a sperm capsule on the ground called a spermatophore. He guides the female over it until she collects it within her reproductive opening. This species can have around a dozen offspring which are born live. They move on to their mother's back shortly after birth, and remain there for several weeks before dispersing to begin independent predatory lives.

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**Food:** Live or freshly dead insects once or twice weekly. Crickets are ideal. Insects about ¼ to ½ the body size of the scorpion are recommended. Dead insects may be fed to the scorpion via forceps or tweezers, but they will also pick up freshly dead insects off the ground. Remove any uneaten food or leftovers after 24 hours.

**Water:** The substrate in your scorpions' enclosure must be kept moist at all times. It should be moist enough that the substrate clumps together if pressed between the fingers. The scorpion will drink from the moist substrate, but you can also add a dish (or bottle lid) with a moist cotton wool ball or sponge.

**Enclosure:** A plastic terrarium is an ideal enclosure for your scorpion, with a minimum size of 20cmH x 30cmW x 20cmD. Place coco-peat or similar substrate in the bottom of the enclosure to a depth of around 3cm, and keep the substrate moist throughout. Place a flat rock or bark in the enclosure as a shelter for your scorpion. Sticks and branches (around finger thick) are good additions for your scorpion to climb upon.

**Temperature:** This species will do best at 22 – 28° C. (Overnight or brief periodic cooling to between 10-20°C is during winter is not harmful as long as daytime temperatures reach above 20°C).

**Humidity:** 60-90%

**Life span:** 1-2 years.

**Handling:** These scorpions may sting if intimidated, handling is not recommended as they are mildly venomous.

**Common issues:** This species can be cannibalistic at times, so they should be kept individually to avoid issues. They can climb rough or textured surfaces (and the bead of silicone in the corners of aquariums). Ensure that an escape proof lid is fitted to prevent escape if such surfaces are present.