

## Care guide

### Rainforest Millipedes (*Rhinocricidae*)



Rainforest Millipedes are a group of animals from tropical northern Australia. There are many different species, and they range in size from around 60mm to 200mm in length. These animals are becoming quite popular as pets, and it is not uncommon to find them for sale in pet shops.

Millipedes are very easy to look after; in fact, most of the time they look after themselves! They live in the soil found under logs, rocks and leaf litter, and they feed on rotting wood and leaf debris. They are very important in terms of helping to break down dead plant material in the rainforest.

Millipedes do not actually have a thousand legs, as their name suggests. They have a series of body segments which each has 2 pairs of legs (ie four legs per segment; two either side of the body). This is different from centipedes that only have 2 legs per body segment. The millipedes' legs move in a wave-like motion when it walks.

When disturbed, millipedes can exude a yellow/brown liquid as part of their defence, as it is distasteful to predators. This liquid can smell and will stain skin brown for a few days. It will not cause humans any harm, but please make sure you wash your hands after handling the millipede, and before eating or rubbing your eyes.

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**Food:** This species likes to feed on rotting wood, decaying leaf litter and Minibeast Wildlife's Millipede Food. They will also feed on small amounts of freshly cut vegetables such as carrot, potato or sweet potato. This should be partially buried in the substrate. Other vegetable scraps can be added from time to time. Add more when as it is eaten.

Calcium in the diet seems to be an important factor in raising these millipedes. Providing cuttlebone or chalk for the millipedes to feed on will help provide the calcium they need. Minibeast Wildlife's Millipede Food includes calcium, so if using this no additional calcium is required.

**Water:** Ensure the substrate remains moist, but not sodden. The millipedes will get their moisture from the damp soil and their food.

**Enclosure:** The enclosure needs to be about 10 cm H x 15 cm W x 20 cm L. Small food storage containers are suitable, but will require some ventilation holes in the lid. Place the enclosure in a position away from direct sunlight. The base of the enclosure should be covered in a substrate of coco-peat (available from garden supply shops) to a depth of around 5cm. The substrate always needs to be kept damp. Place a plastic container or piece of bark in the enclosure for the millipedes to shelter under. Covering the top of the substrate with leaf litter will create more shelter for the millipedes, as well as provide additional food.

**Temperature/humidity:** Safe temperature zone is 15 – 24°C. They will cope well in cooler conditions but may suffer heat stress if kept above 28°C for extended periods. Humidity 60 – 90% (which is easily maintained by keeping the substrate moist).

**Life span:** around 2-5 years

**Handling:** These millipedes cannot bite and can be handled safely. They should be picked up gently by their bodies, and carefully placed on the hand. They may release a yellow/brown liquid if they feel threatened. This is not harmful, but can smell a little and will stain the skin for a few days. Always wash your hands after handling these animals.

**Common issues:** Stress by over-handling may occur if handled more than once a day. Limit the handling to a period of 10-15 minutes daily.

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

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