



Fiddler Crabs *Genus Uca sp.*

- Fiddler crabs are a large genus of small, saltwater to brackish (mixture of fresh and saltwater) crabs found on beaches, lagoons, swamps, and other inter tidal wetlands of West Africa, Western Atlantic, Eastern Pacific, and Indo Pacific regions depending on species.
- Fiddler crabs consist of about 90-100 species that vary greatly in size, color, and shape. The most distinctive feature are their sexually dimorphic, asymmetrical claws that are large in males, and small and reduced in females and juvenile crabs.
- These crabs communicate and interact with one another by claw waving and other gestures/actions.
- Fiddler crabs may live 3-5 years in captivity.

Size

Fiddler crabs are small crabs, but can vary in size depending on age and species, from less than 1/2" to 2 1/2".

Housing

Most fiddler crabs that are available in stores and within the pet industry require a brackish water setup (rather than freshwater), as well as access to dry land or other areas they can emerge from the water. Water salinity can be measured using a store purchased hydrometer, and should read at around 1.005-1.010. Using varying amounts of commercially available aquarium salt can adjust this accordingly. Fiddler crabs should be housed in a secure, sturdy, adequately ventilated terrarium, aquarium, or other enclosure. Fiddler crabs may be kept communally (meaning they are often found in groups), and multiple crabs can be housed together provided an adequately sized enclosure is accordingly provided, although males may fight. A 10-20 gallon or similar sized enclosure (or larger depending on the number of crabs maintained) is suitable. Crabs that are not provided adequate space may fight and possibly kill one another for resources. A substrate that enables these fiddler crabs to dig and burrow, as well as maintain adequate humidity should also be provided. Sand substrates as well as fine aquarium gravel and mixtures thereof can be used for added security and stimuli including driftwood, artificial foliage, and hides in the form of log or slab hides, rocks, clay flower pots, or other commercially designed hides and cage decor.

Adequate humidity is perhaps one of the most important factors for maintaining fiddler crabs, which should be around 70%. A temperature gradient should also be provided in the enclosure, with around 70-85 degrees F for ambient and water temperatures. Crabs that are exposed to direct sunlight or heat constantly may overheat. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage UV or incandescent bulb.

Feeding/Diet

In the wild, fiddler crabs are primarily scavengers, feeding on tiny bits of organic plant and animal matter they are able to locate during foraging.

In captivity, a varied, rotating diet for fiddler crabs is recommend. Many commercially available fish and crab foods and diets are available (i.e. algae disks, sinking pellets, commercially available crab and fish foods, etc), with some being better and more suitable than others. It is always a good idea to read and understand any labels and ingredients on any such diets that may be used. Fiddler crabs will also eat freeze dried plankton, krill, bloodworms, or

shrimp as well. Further information on what constitutes a suitable vs. unsuitable hermit crab diet can be provided upon request.

Handling

Fiddler crabs can be handled carefully, although they may pinch (which is not painful or dangerous). They can be allowed to walk on one's hands. Care should be taken to not drop them, however, since this can fracture their shell and/or cause internal injury to them. Overall though, handling fiddler crabs is not necessary or required.

Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens