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## Haitian Brown Tarantula (*Phormictopus cancerides*)

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### **Big and Brown West Indies Natives**

Haitian brown tarantulas are a relatively medium sized to large, terrestrial, semi fossorial to semi-burrowing tarantula species that tends to be solitary and nocturnal, as with most other tarantulas. This is a large tarantula species with hairs ranging from blackish, velvet-brown, reddish-brown, to purplish-brown. As with many tarantulas, this species can use its hind limbs to flick its loosely lodged hairs on its abdomen and limbs to serve as an irritant to many predators, and are known as urticating hairs. A bold and hardy species, the Haitian brown is an attractive choice for a pet tarantula for the beginning to intermediate enthusiast.

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum:** Arthropoda

**Subphylum:** Chelicerata

**Class:** Arachnida

**Order:** Araneae

**Infraorder:** Mygalomorphae

**Family:** Theraphosidae

**Genus:** *Phormictopus*

**Species:** *Phormictopus cancerides*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

Males of many tarantula species will often attain life spans of only 5 to 6 years. Females attain considerably longer life spans of 15 to 20 years or more in captivity.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The Haitian brown tarantula is a relatively medium sized to large, terrestrial to semi-fossorial species of New World tarantula indigenous to portions of northern South America. Additionally, and more specifically, this species occurs from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba, to the West Indies to Brazil in South America. Within this range, this species occupies the tropical to sub-tropical forests, woodlands, to scrublands, where they occupy self-excavated burrows, burrows constructed by other animals, and underneath vegetation, rocks, logs, and other ground

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debris.

### **Conservation Status**

Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

### **Legal and Regulatory Status (\*Subject to Change)**

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

### **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Haitian brown tarantulas are medium-sized to large tarantulas reaching a total legspan of about 5 to 7 inches on average.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

Provide a sturdy, secure, and escape proof terrarium or enclosure 5 to 10 gallons long in size with a secure top for a single adult spider. Several of the acrylic displays and enclosures that are now manufactured for housing arachnids, insects, and other invertebrates can also be used. Spiderlings can be housed in an appropriately sized spiderling vial, plastic container or deli cup with adequate holes for ventilation. Acceptable substrate to use can include pesticide free potting soil, coconut fiber, vermiculite, or similar substrates 3 to 4 inches in depth. Decorations and/or other cage furnishings can also be included as well, although floor space is more important than height. This is a primarily terrestrial to burrowing species, but benefits from branches, horizontal cork bark, and plants for refuge. A fairly small, shallow water dish can also be provided, and should be cleaned regularly as well as regular misting for hydration.

### **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Most species of tarantulas have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it can be greatly beneficial for your tarantula's health, immune system, and overall wellness. Haitian brown tarantulas can be maintained at room temperature between 75 to 82 degrees. Maintain at around 65 to 75% humidity. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Insectivorous to Carnivorous;*** In the wild, Haitian brown tarantulas are primarily insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and other invertebrates. They will also occasionally eat smaller vertebrates as well if they can catch and subdue them. In captivity, these tarantulas can be fed a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. This will promote optimal exoskeleton growth and development. Any uneaten food items should be cleaned and removed after a day or two. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed even invertebrates, as

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obesity and other health related issues can still become an issue with them. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

Haitian browns are a large, bold, and attractive species that make for popular choices with the more intermediate arachnid enthusiast. They may act boldly and assume a defensive posture, but are not typically an overly defensive species or one that is prone to kicking urticating hairs. As with any tarantula, however, they should be handled carefully and not be dropped while being handled. Tarantulas are fragile animals, and accidentally dropping a spider can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing death to your tarantula. Although most tarantulas are not medically significant, with most being lesser than or just about equal to a bee sting, medical attention should still be sought from any apparent allergic reaction to a bite, or extreme irritation from urticating hairs from a pet tarantula.

\*\*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\*\*

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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