



*Fangs & Fashion

Mexican Red Kneed Tarantula (*Brachypelma smithi*)

A Long Time Classic

Mexican red kneed tarantulas are a fairly large tarantula that are black to dark colored with vibrant red to reddish range patches on the legs and joints. A docile and hardy species, the Mexican red kneed tarantula is an attractive and suitable choice for beginners that has long been a popular choice among beginning hobbyists and pet owners.

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: *Brachypelma*

Species: *Brachypelma smithi**

*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

Mexican red kneed tarantulas are a burrowing to terrestrial species that tends to be solitary and nocturnal, as with most other tarantulas. This species is native to the mountain ranges of western Mexico.

Conservation Status

IUCN Red List Lower Risk (LR) to near Threatened (NT).

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Legal and Regulatory Status (*Subject to Change)

Brachypelma spp. are CITES Appendix II as of October 2017. Also consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Mexican red-kneed tarantulas are medium-sized to large tarantulas reaching a total legspan of about 4 to 5 ½ 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. Mexican red kneed tarantulas are a hardy species that do best at room temperature between 70 to 80 degrees. 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, Mexican red kneed 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 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

Mexican red kneed tarantulas are typically a docile and slow moving species that can be handled carefully so as to avoid injuring the spider. Tarantulas are fragile animals, and accidentally dropping a spider can result in the rupture of its internal organs and/or exoskeleton, causing

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death to your tarantula. Mexican red kneed tarantulas may also kick urticating hairs from their abdomen and hind legs or “rear up” to display its fangs and front legs when upset or agitated. 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

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. MAHS cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety, including any and all MAHS logos and disclaimers.

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