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Texas Brown Tarantulas (*Aphonopelma anax*) and (*Aphonopelma hentzi*)

Docile, Hairy Natives of the Southwest

Texas brown tarantulas are a burrowing to terrestrial species that tends to be solitary and nocturnal, as with most other tarantulas. A docile and hardy species, the Texas browns are large species that tends to be docile, hardy, and easily kept. These large tarantulas range in ground color from a brass to bronze, tan, blonde, or light brown or chocolate brown carapace, abdomen, and legs.

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: *Aphonopelma*

Species: *Aphonopelma anax** and *Aphonopelma hentzi**

*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 Texas brown tarantulas are a genus of over 90 species found in the arid to semi-arid deserts, grasslands, and scrubland regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico.

Conservation Status

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

Experience Level Required

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Novice/Beginner.

Size

Texas brown tarantulas are medium-sized to large tarantulas reaching a total legspan of about 3 ½ to 5 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. The Texas brown tarantulas are a hardy species that do best at room temperature between 70 to 85 degrees. They can tolerate humidity levels of 55 to 75%. 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, Texas 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 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

The desert and Texas brown tarantulas are typically a docile, hardy, and slow moving species that can be handled carefully so as to avoid injuring the spider. This is a great beginner's species to keep and work with. 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. However, these species may also kick urticating hairs from its abdomen and hind legs or "rear up" to display its fangs and front legs when upset or agitated, although seldom. Although most

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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.

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