

Hermit Crab (Land)

Coenobita spp



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Hermit crabs are nocturnal scavengers that will eat almost anything. Hermit crabs live in large groups in the wild and do best in groups of three or more. They were labeled “hermit” because of the shell they carry on their back that they hide in when sensing danger.



Is a hermit crab the right choice for you?

Check “Yes” or “No” after reading the following statements:

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I have room for an appropriately sized habitat.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. I have the space to house at least three hermit crabs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I can commit to providing proper care for this hermit crab.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this crab.

If you answered, “Yes” to these statements, a land hermit crab may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a hermit crab and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible animal care.

Average Size 2 to 6 inches long, depending on species **Life Span** 10+ years with proper care

Diet High quality commercial hermit crab food

Recommended treats include natural foods: any non-citrus fruits (such as mangoes, coconut, and papayas); vegetables (such as spinach and romaine lettuce); nuts; seaweed; brine shrimp; rice; fish food flakes

Always wash all fruits and vegetables prior to feeding them to your hermit crab; this removes any pesticides, dirt or chemicals

Provide carotene (found in most red, orange or yellow vegetables) and calcium supplements (such as cuttlebone)

Feeding Crush all pelleted foods before feeding and feed at night

Hermit crabs appreciate variety in their food.

Housing Size – 10–gallon or larger glass aquarium with a glass or screen lid; in general, the tank size should be 1 ½ gallons per 1-inch of crab

Habitat – New shells should be a bit bigger than the current shell; provide climbing materials and hiding areas

Substrate – Sand or forest bedding, at least 3 inches deep

Humidity – No less than 70-80% (to keep gills moist, prevent dehydration and ease molting)

Temperature – Range from 70° - 80°F

Water – Keep two shallow dishes of water in the habitat at all times: one with fresh, de-chlorinated water and one with salt water. The water should not be any deeper than ¼ - ½ inch – any deeper and your hermit crab could drown. A sponge can be placed in the dish to help your crab climb in and out.

Recommended Supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate size glass aquarium	<input type="checkbox"/> Hermit crab food	<input type="checkbox"/> Décor
	<input type="checkbox"/> Substrate	<input type="checkbox"/> Water conditioner	<input type="checkbox"/> Light
	<input type="checkbox"/> Water and food dishes	<input type="checkbox"/> Humidity gauge	<input type="checkbox"/> Heater
	<input type="checkbox"/> Climbing and hiding places	<input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuttlebone
	<input type="checkbox"/> Book about hermit crabs	<input type="checkbox"/> Extra shells	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponge

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Characteristics With a lot of practice and patience, hermit crabs can be handled.

Usually molt once or twice a year; will bury itself in the sand; do not disturb during this process as the crab is very fragile; protect from other crabs by installing a divider or placing in another tank; ensure proper humidity level is maintained.

In the wild, hermit crabs can travel a mile or more every night! Because of this, ensure there are plenty of things for them to climb on and explore.

If a hermit crab grabs you with a claw, lightly mist the shell with warm water or return it to the habitat. Once safely back in the habitat, the crab should release you.

Habitat Maintenance Check humidity daily; replace the water and clean the sponges (if used) with clean, de-chlorinated water daily or more often, as needed.

Remove uneaten food and debris from substrate daily; clean entire habitat once a month.

Bathe hermit crabs every week in a non-metal container with a little lukewarm, fresh, de-chlorinated water (remember to keep the water level very low): immerse the crab upside down and let it right itself or put the crab in the container and let it walk around; when the bath is done, remove the crab, drain the water out of the shell and place them in a secure area with paper towels to dry off. Ensure the crab is dry; don't put a wet crab back into the habitat because the substrate will stick to them and they will be dirty again.

Because all hermit crabs are potential carriers of infectious diseases and salmonella, always wash your hands before and after handling your hermit crabs and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.

Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for hermit crabs and should consider not having hermit crabs as a pet. For more information regarding hermit crabs and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/animal care sheets>.

- Signs of a Healthy Hermit Crab**
- Healthy appetite
 - Active

Common Health Issues	Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
	Mites	Mites appear in the habitat or directly on the crab	Completely clean habitat and habitat contents in hot water; replace substrate; bathe crab in lukewarm water; ensure no mites are visible on the crab before returning to clean habitat

- Red Flags**
- Listlessness
 - Loss of appetite
 - Abandons shell and does not return

If you notice any of these signs, check habitat temperature and humidity levels, ensure habitat is clean, ensure clean water and food is available or contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Preventing Common Health Issues

Avoid crowded conditions; they are a major cause of stress and disease

Maintain proper temperature and humidity levels

Provide clean, de-chlorinated water and do not disturb when molting

Sources *Hermit Crabs for Dummies* by Kelli A. Wilkins

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact an exotic animal veterinarian.