

# Chilean Rose Hair Tarantula

*Gramastola rosea*



**LIFE SPAN:** Males: 4-5 years  
Females: up to 15-20 years

**AVERAGE ADULT SIZE:** 5-6 inches

**CAGE TEMPS:** 75-90 °F

**CAGE HUMIDITY:** 70 %

\* If temp falls below 70 at night, may need supplemental infrared heat for night-time

**WILD HISTORY:** Rose hair tarantulas are from the deserts of Bolivia, Argentina and Chile. This species dig burrows to hide away from the hot sun of the day and then comes out at night to hunt.

**NORMAL BEHAVIOR & INTERACTION:** Nocturnal. Docile and tolerant, rose hairs can be handled, but handling may cause stress to the animal.

Rose hair tarantulas *can* bite and their bites do deliver a tiny bit of venom. It is possible that some people may have an anaphylactic reaction to the venom from a rose hair, but the odds are low, as the venom is not very strong. Most bite victims suffer only a bit of pain, itching and burning.

Tarantulas are invertebrate arachnids. Arachnids are terrestrial arthropods, which have simple eyes and four pairs of legs. Scorpions, ticks and mites are also arachnids.

**NOTE:** Rose Hair tarantulas should be housed alone with no exceptions.

**FEEDING:** Carnivorous, live food

Protein sources such as: gut-loaded crickets, mealworms, cockroaches, kingworms, and wax worms dusted with a supplement should be offered.

Wild caught insects should never be fed, since they can carry disease. All insects should be gut loaded (fed a nutritious diet about 24-hours before being offered to your scorpion – see our cricket care sheet).

Adults should be fed about 3-6 large crickets per week (or other prey equaling about this amount)

Feed about twice a week, at night, as they are nocturnal.

It is not uncommon for a tarantula to feast heavily for several weeks and then fast for a few weeks after.

**SHEDDING (MOLTING):** Tarantulas need good humidity in their habitats in order to molt properly. If the humidity is not adequate, your pet may not be able to shed completely, which can be deadly. The interesting thing about tarantula molts is that the spider may regenerate lost legs during the process.

A tarantula on its back is not a dead tarantula; it is a molting tarantula! So, don't panic if you see your spider upside down with its legs sticking straight up in the air.

**It is very important not to disturb your pet during this time, or you may stress him/her to the point where he abandons the molting process. This can be very dangerous and possibly fatal.**

Prior to a molt, your tarantula may not accept food for a week or so and he may spin a small web on the floor of the enclosure and sit around it during this time. The web will serve as a bed to lie on during the molt; it also is an attempt to deter insects from disturbing him. Immediately after his molt, your spider's new skin will be very soft and vulnerable, so it is very important that nothing comes in contact with him that might hurt him – including insects – so remove any uneaten prey from the cage as soon as you suspect he may be molting.

Your tarantula's molt will only take from one to three hours to complete. It usually happens during the night, so if you want to see it happen, you'll have to try to stay awake!

When finished, the old molted skin will look exactly like your spider. DO NOT feed your spider for at least three days after the molt. A cricket bite on the new, soft skin can be painful and dangerous.

**SUPPLEMENTS:** No supplements are needed for your rose hair, just be sure to gut-load the crickets well.

**WATER:** A shallow dish of clean fresh chlorine-free water must always be available. Place it on the cool side of your spider's enclosure. Change it daily, or as needed. All water given to your pet for drinking, as well as water used for misting, soaking or bathing must be 100% free of chlorine and heavy metals. (Not all home water filtration systems remove 100% of the chlorine and heavy metals from tap water). We recommend that you use unflavored bottled drinking water or bottled natural spring water; never untreated tap water. If tap water is used, you should treat it with a de-chlorinating treatment. Do not use distilled water, which can cause severe medical problems, since it lacks minerals that are essential to important body functions. If only tap water can be used, at least de-chlorinate the water. De-chlorinator is available in the pet store fish department. If you do not want to chemically de-chlorinate the water, you can leave an open container of tap water out for at least 24 hours. The chlorine will naturally dissipate.

A daily misting or two with chlorine-free water will also be appreciated. However, care should be taken not to allow the enclosure to become damp. Also, do not mist less than two hours before turning the heat lamps off for the day, as the droplets will not have proper time to dry and may contribute to respiratory disease.

**RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES:**

- \*2-5 gallon aquarium or breeder tank or larger.
- \*Tight fitting screen top with clip locks
- \*Under tank heater
- \*Temperature / humidity gauge – do not stick to side of tank
- \*Dry hide house
- \*Coconut fiber substrate, moistened
- \*Plastic plants for decoration and cover
- \*Tarantula book

**HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT:** Invertebrates like rose hair tarantulas are ectothermic, or cold-blooded, which means they are dependent on the temperature of their immediate environment to regulate their body temperature. Therefore, we must create an environment that provides them with the heat that they need.

**ENCLOSURE SIZE:** The enclosure should be a solid glass or plastic sided enclosure. Since they are nearly blind, tarantulas are more comfortable in a space that is cozy and secure, but not *too* small; they need to be able to move around. A larger plastic “critter keeper” or tank between 2-5 gallons is an ideal cage for a rose hair tarantula.

**COVER:** Make sure the cage has an escape-proof mesh top. It should fit snugly onto the tank and have strong clips locking it on.

**HEAT PAD:** Reptile heat pads can be adhered directly onto the underside of the glass bottom of the tank. Stick the pad on the glass on one of the very far ends of the tank (opposite the water dish). For safety reasons, make sure to attach the rubber feet (contained in the box) at all four corners of the underside of the tank. This will allow air to circulate underneath the tank and prevent the heat from being trapped under the tank. Leave the heat pad ON 24 hours a day.

A human-grade heat pad may be used on the low to medium setting. Do be sure to allow for proper ventilation for safety reasons. \*\*Be sure to purchase a heat pad without automatic shut-off, which are still available.

Heat pads specifically manufactured for reptiles and human-grade heat pads are safe to leave on 24 hours a day. DO NOT use reptile heat rocks. They heat unevenly and have caused severe thermal burns in reptiles and amphibians.

**HEAT LAMP:** A heat lamp is only necessary if the tank cannot be kept at 80 degrees. The heat lamp should be turned on in the morning, and off at night. (See “Day/Night Light Cycles” below).

If necessary, use an 25 watt infrared heat lamp and keep it at the distance needed to keep the enclosure at 80 degrees and not warmer.

Follow directions carefully with all products – READ THE INSTRUCTION SHEET!!

Always choose fixtures with ceramic sockets and be careful to choose the socket that is properly rated for the wattage bulb that you will be using. Do not place the fixtures by dry wood or flammable fabrics.

All heaters should be placed out of the reach of children and all pets – including cats and dogs.

Be very careful to make sure that your caged pet cannot reach and touch the heating device in its own cage. A thermal burn to the face or body can be painful and life threatening.

**UVB LIGHT:** This is a nocturnal species. UV light is not necessary for rose hair tarantulas. Most tarantulas do not like bright light and will hide away from it.

**HIDE HOUSE:** Place a hide house inside the cage directly over where you have positioned the heat pad.

**WATER BOWL:** A shallow water dish can be placed on the opposite end of the cage from the hide house.

**BEDDING:** Rose hairs love to dig burrows. We recommend a loose coconut fiber substrate, available in the reptile department and made by several companies. It is made from the husks of coconuts. This substrate is ideal for rose hairs as it will help hold humidity in and is also a perfect substrate for plants. Keep the substrate slightly damp, but not watery, at about three inches deep.

**BRANCHES & PLANTS:** Rose hairs do occasionally climb. Branches and plants are not necessary, but can be included for decoration and in case your spider decides to climb a bit.

**TEMPERATURES:** Cage temperatures should be monitored daily and kept at the temperatures listed at the top of this page. Use your reptile thermometer to check the temperatures in different places in the cage regularly to make sure they continually match the listed proper temperatures.

\* If the room temperature falls below 70 degrees at night, a supplemental infrared or ceramic heat fixture may be necessary. (These fixtures do not emit a light spectrum that is visible to the tarantula, so it will not disturb him at night, but they WILL provide the necessary supplemental heat.)

If your tarantula does not receive the proper heat at the proper temperatures, he may become sick with issues such as respiratory disease and may stop eating, as tarantulas have a hard time digesting their food without proper heat.

**DAY/NIGHT LIGHT CYCLES AND HEATING:** All tarantulas must have distinct day and night periods in their enclosure to maintain their biological rhythms. Rose hair tarantulas need 8-12 hours of daytime and 8-12 hours of nighttime. However, as the daylight hours change seasonally outside, daylight hours inside the tank should reflect the same.

**The day period must be light, and the night period must be dark.**

A timer should be used to set day/night periods.

**HABITAT MAINTENANCE:** Daily maintenance should consist of spot cleaning by removing soiled substrate, cleaning water bowl thoroughly and wiping glass clean.

**DO NOT PERFORM A THOROUGH CLEANING IF YOUR SPIDER IS MOLTING!**

The entire tank should be cleaned thoroughly at least once every 2-3 months with:

- A mild dishwashing liquid (a weak dilution) in warm water,  
THEN
- Vinegar & water (1:8)  
OR bleach and warm water (1:32)
- Cage “furniture” should also be scrubbed clean with the same dilution.
- RINSE OFF ALL SOAP AND BLEACH THOROUGHLY WITH PLAIN WATER BEFORE RE-INTRODUCING YOUR PET TO ITS ENCLOSURE!!
- NEVER MIX VINEGAR AND BLEACH – IT CREATES A TOXIC SOLUTION
- NOTE: water used for cleaning does not need to be de-chlorinated, as your pet will not be drinking it or bathing in it.

**GROOMING & HYGIENE:** All handlers should wash their hands after handling a tarantula.

**SIGNS OF A HEALTHY ANIMAL:** smooth, even body; no traces of mites (small, reddish brown spots around face area, rounded, full body; strong, regular record of healthy feeding schedule.

It is very important to keep a journal for each animal that records feeding, refusal, molting, unusual behavior, changes in behavior and dates of bulb changes. This will help your veterinarian trouble-shoot any health issues.

**SIGNS OF ILLNESS:** Irregular body colorations; small reddish brown spots (mites) around face area, dull colored body when not in a shed; thinned body; irregular feeding and habits. A limp, thin body; lethargy or missing patches of hair. A molt that lasts longer than 4 hours.

## **SOME COMMON PROBLEMS INCLUDE:**

### **HEALTH ISSUE:**

### **SYMPTOMS:**

### **TREATMENT:**

Mites	Small reddish-brown spots around eyes, mouth & on body or in substrate. However, pet may show no signs of harboring parasites besides declining health.	See an EXOTIC vet for analysis of specific parasite and medicinal treatment.
Shedding problems – loss of legs	Missing appendages	Fix cage temperatures and humidity.
Trauma	Outward signs of biting, tearing, stress, aggression	See an EXOTIC vet for treatment of current problem. Adjust enclosure occupants. Avoid overcrowding, mixed species.

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