

## Is this the right pet for me?

Hermit crabs make interesting pets but like all pets they require care and attention. While they do not need to be taken out for a walk they still need to be provided with food, water, proper housing and replacement shells. They are also very quiet!

## Recommended for...

- Children.
- People with limited space.
- People after something a little different as a pet.

## Lifespan

Up to 20 years depending on the species.

## Feeding

Hermit crabs are omnivores meaning they eat meat, vegetables and fruit. Examples of good foods to offer are fresh fish, shrimp, coconut, broccoli and dehydrated aquarium fish foods. Food should be offered all the time.



## NEW HERMIT CRAB CHECKLIST

Here's a list of the essentials you'll need for your new Hermit Crab. Please ask any of the Best Friends team to help you with your selections.

### Essential equipment

- Terrarium or aquarium tank of appropriate size with suitable heating, bedding and furniture.
- Thermometers, hygrometer and hydrometer.
- Replacement shells of various sizes.
- 2 deep water bowls.

### Food

- A supply of fresh meat, vegetables and fruit or a suitable dried food product for Hermit Crabs.

## Special Offer:



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[www.bestfriendspets.com.au](http://www.bestfriendspets.com.au)

# Caring for your Hermit Crab





## Selecting a Hermit Crab

All land hermit crabs sold in pet stores are taken directly from the wild as hermit crabs do not breed in captivity. When selecting a hermit crab choose active crabs that have all their body parts i.e. not missing any legs or claws.

Hermit crabs in the wild will live in large colonies and so when purchasing hermit crabs it is best to select at least 2 or more.

## Housing

The proper housing is vital for the survival of captive hermit crabs. A hermit crab's tank is often referred to as a 'crabita'.

Hermit crabs should be kept in a glass Terrarium or Aquarium. A 40 litre tank will be adequate for accommodating 5 small hermit crabs. It must have a lid that prevents escapes, allows air circulation and helps hold in the heat and humidity.

Hermit crabs are tropical animals and as such like warm, humid conditions. The ideal method of providing heat is to place a heat mat under the tank at one end. At this warm



end the temperature should be kept at 28°C while at the cooler end a temperature of 21°C is required. These should be monitored with a thermometer.

One common cause of death in hermit crabs is a lack of humidity. When the air in the tank is allowed to dry out too much their gills dry up and they are unable to breathe. It is therefore essential that the humidity in the tank is maintained at 72-82%. This should be monitored using a hygrometer. The air inside the tank can be misted with distilled water when required to increase humidity.

The type of bedding is also very important. The best types of bedding are 100% coconut fibre moistened with salt water and/or ultra-fine sand. Avoid using desert sand, gravel, crushed coral, wood shavings or any synthetic material as these materials either dry the air out too much, have toxic chemicals present or do not allow the crabs to fully bury themselves. Hermit crabs need to moult (shed their exoskeleton) in order to grow. When they do this they must be able to fully bury themselves in their bedding. For this reason the bedding should be at least double the height of the largest hermit crab in the tank.

Two water bowls are required. One should be filled with salt water. Salt designed for use with salt water aquariums is adequate. A hydrometer should be used to make sure the salt and water is mixed to the correct salinity. The hydrometer should read from 1.021 to 1.025 at 25°C. Natural sea water is also a good alternative. The other water bowl must contain fresh water. Both bowls need to be deep enough to allow the crabs to fully immerse themselves but have some way for the crabs to escape so they do not drown.

Hermit crabs like to climb and hide so branches and caves in the tank will make them feel right at home.

## Moulting and Shells

As stated above hermit crabs need to moult to grow. This is a very stressful time in a hermit crab's life. Most hermit crabs will bury themselves prior to moulting and will remain so for up to 2 weeks. It is important not to disturb them during this period.

The most fascinating part of owning a hermit crab is the fact that they carry their house, a shell, around with them. When a hermit crab moults and grows it will require a slightly larger shell than the previous one they occupied. It is essential to provide them with a good selection of unpainted shells of varying sizes. Shells must be unpainted as hermit crabs will chew on anything placed in the tank and any paint removed from the shell may be toxic.

## Responsible pet ownership

In most areas of Australia you are required by law to register your pets. In some cases there are restrictions on the number and types of pets you are allowed to keep. Check with your local government for further information on your rights and responsibilities both to your hermit crab and to your neighbours.

## Further Information

An excellent reference is the website, [www.hermitcrabparadise.com](http://www.hermitcrabparadise.com).