

Husbandry Data Sheet

Common Name: *Chilean Rose-haired Tarantula* **Latin Name:** *Grammostola rosea*

Family: Theraphosidae

Order: Araneae/Mygalomorphae

Class: Arachnida

Phylum: Arthropoda

Natural History: Range: Bolivia, Argentina, and Northern Chile Habitat: In shallow burrows in forested areas; also deserts and scrublands Wild diet: Mostly large insects such as crickets, grasshoppers, beetles and roaches; will also eat smaller tarantulas and other spiders, frogs, and baby mice Life span: 15-20 years for females; 1-2 years for males Reproduction: After breeding, the female lays about 400 eggs on a silk patch; she forms a loose bag around the patch and the eggs; the eggs hatch in about two months into spiderlings; females guard the egg sack until the eggs hatch

Permits Required: No

Life Stage: Adult

Ease of Care: Easy

Housing:

Temp:

Humidity:

Substrate: dry peat

of Animals per Exhibit: one

Choose One: Solitary

Compatible Species:

Enclosure Description: 10 gallon tank

Lighting/Photoperiod:

Furniture/Props: wood hide

Escape Concerns:

Other Concerns/Precautions:

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Diet/Frequency of Feeding: crickets / 2x week

Water Source/Frequency: bowl / kept full

Care: Daily

Enrichment: pinky mice on occasion

Medical/Health Concerns:

Treatment:

Keeper Safety:

Other Concerns/Precautions:

Education

Do you handle species directly with the guests? : Yes

If Yes or No how do you use the species with the guest: This animal is used in themed presentations both indoors and outdoors; on hand as well as in a carrier depending on presenters preference. This animal is presented to all audiences without restriction. This animal is not available for touch encounters.

Conservation/Population Status:

Message: 1. There are more than 800 species of tarantulas worldwide. Some scientists think, however, that there may be twice that many species waiting to be discovered and classified. Their size rivals that of the biggest land invertebrates, such as giant centipedes, Goliath beetles, and Imperial scorpions. The Goliath tarantula (*Theraphosa leblondi*) of northern South America has a legspan 10.2 inches (26 cm), although its weight is no more than 3 ounces (85 grams).

2. These very large, very hairy members of the Family Theraphosidae are called tarantulas in North America, baboon spiders in Africa, and arañas peludas (hairy spiders) in Spanish America. They also are known as bird-

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eating spiders, a name which is misleading because the spiders do not eat that many birds. The name was probably applied to the largest tarantulas—arachnids definitely big enough to eat birds. Their diet is more likely to include small reptiles, amphibians, beetles, moths, grasshoppers, and smaller spiders.

3. Tarantulas are essentially forest spiders, although in some arid regions there are many desert-adapted species.

4. Despite their formidable appearance, many species of tarantulas are relatively placid and will bite humans only when provoked. Other tarantulas, particularly those from Africa and southeast Asia, can be irritable and aggressive. Many are capable of giving a painful bite, although it is rarely serious. To attack, these spiders raise the front of the body with legs held high in the air and strike powerfully downwards to drive in the large fangs. The venom is lethal to animals the size of the tarantula's prey; most humans only experience effects similar to a bee sting unless they are extremely allergic.

5. Tarantulas have many enemies: Tarantula hawk wasps use paralyzed living tarantulas as a food larder for their young, which hatch from eggs laid on the spider's body; mammals (including humans) dig them from their burrows. Some of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon actually make an "omelet" out of tarantula eggs and eat them; some humans even eat the adult tarantulas (see Cool Fact #7 below). The young spiders are preyed upon by birds, reptiles, and amphibians.

6. Tarantulas rely on their sensory hairs for hunting; the thick, hairy covering of the body (about 1 million per spider) is extremely sensitive to vibration. The molting process replaces the hairy coat as well as allowing for the growth of the spider. When startled or threatened, tarantulas "kick off" these hairs. (This is a fancy way of saying they bang themselves on the bum so hard they fire their body hairs like darts at attackers—Whackada, Whackada, Whackada!)

7. Some people consider tarantulas a delicacy and eat them (sounds like the main course at an Indiana Jones banquet). A hot fire or a blowtorch(!) is recommended to destroy the body hairs prior to consumption. Extreme pharyngeal irritation has resulted from eating poorly prepared tarantulas. In one case, several people who shared an exotic dinner that included batter-dipped, deep-fried Chilean rose-haired tarantula, complained of tingling in the mouth and throat. When the remaining cooked tarantula was examined, urticating hairs were found on the abdomen. The moral to this story: cooked tarantula is a potentially irritating food. There goes the franchise idea for Colonel Sander's Chilean Fried Spider! What human beings WON'T eat seems to be a very short list indeed.

8. Despite this harassment by humans, Chilean rose-haired spiders are very docile and calm. They are extremely handleable and do not flick their abdomen hairs easily. Their venom is very mild, and they are highly unlikely to bite. Commonly imported for the pet trade (they are considered excellent "beginner spiders" for the budding enthusiast), these spiders are now commonly captive bred in the USA and are readily available from pet stores and off the Internet. (But what ISN'T available off the Internet these days?)

9. Also known as the Chilean Rose, the Chilean Common, the Chilean Fire, and the Chilean Flame, this is a medium sized tarantula with about a 5 inch (12.5 cm) legspan. The colorful parts of their common names comes from, well yes, their color. There are, in fact, two color phases of the same species: one is a tan to brown overall with pink hairs and a pinkish carapace; the other has red hairs all over its body. The two color phases were formerly classified as separate species, but are now considered just one.

10. Tarantulas, indeed all spiders, are often misunderstood and feared, even though most cannot cause much harm to humans (except a bad scare). Tarantulas eat other animals that humans consider pests, such as insects. A British arachnologist (that's a scientist who studies spiders) calculated in the 1930s that an undisturbed field in southeast England (not exactly the hottest spot for spider life) might contain more than 2 million spiders per acre (about 5 million per hectare). He went on to estimate that for the country (England, that is) as a whole, the weight of insects consumed annually by spiders would exceed the total weight of the human inhabitants—as a conservative estimate! The message for zoo visitors: Leave tarantulas and all spiders alone. Don't squash every spider you see. The only spiders to be concerned about in your home are the Brown recluse and the Black widow, neither of which is commonly found in homes. Other spiders are just doing their job—quietly munching away at insect pests in the dark corners—and should be encouraged.

Personal Comments:

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