

----- Feeding

In the wild they are omnivores, feeding on both plant & animal material. Their diet should be based on a balanced commercial food supplemented with a variety of fresh foods or treats. Pelleted foods can be fed once a day (crushed especially for smaller crabs). Uneaten food, including the pelleted /commercial foods, should be removed daily. A wide variety of foods from the list below should be offered on a rotating basis (a few each day): papaya, coconut (fresh or dried), apples, applesauce, bananas, grapes, pineapple, strawberries, melons, carrots, spinach, watercress, leafy green lettuces (not iceberg), broccoli, grass, leaves & strips of bark from deciduous trees (no conifers), nuts (unsalted nuts), peanut butter, (occasionally) raisins, seaweed, crackers (no or low salt), unsweetened cereals, plain rice cakes, popcorn (plain)

Seek veterinary attention if your pet changes behavior or becomes inactive; this may indicate the pet has an illness.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for proper pet practices. Be prepared to take an ill pet to a Veterinarian & know which Veterinarian in your area can treat your pet.



check-list ✓

Your pet Land Hermit Crab requires...

- Aquarium or Vivarium of appropriate size
- Under-tank heater or 'heated rock' (optional)
- Bathing dish or bowl (big enough for the crab)
- UVB Light (maintains plants & humidity)
- Rocks, moss & Ferns (for hiding spots)
- Dish for drinking water (small)
- Misting bottle (simple plant sprayer for water)
- Thermometer
- Food dish for treats & one for 'crab feed'



Land Hermit Crabs



- Size: .5 cm to 15.5 cm in length (2-2.5 inches or 4-6 cm is typical)
- Life Span: 14 - 20 years on average - well kept specimens have reached over 40

----- Temperament

Hermit crabs are not "true crabs." They have a smaller, soft abdomen which they protect by living in an empty snail shell. They must find larger shells as they grow, & you will need to provide progressively larger shells as your pet grows. Most species have long, spirally curved abdomens, which are soft, unlike the hard, calcified abdomens seen in related crustaceans. The vulnerable abdomen is protected from predators by a salvaged empty seashell carried by the hermit crab, into which its whole body can retract. Several hermit crab species, both terrestrial & marine, use "vacancy chains" to find new shells: when a new, bigger shell becomes available, hermit crabs gather around it & form a kind of queue from largest to smallest. When the largest crab moves into the new shell, the second biggest crab moves into the newly vacated shell, thereby making its previous shell available to the third crab, & so on.

Land hermit crabs are relatively easy to find in pet stores & the most common are two main species of hermit crabs: *Coenobita clypeatus* (or Caribbean crab, purple pincher crab, land hermit crab, tree crab, or soldier crab) & *Coenobita compressus* (Ecuadorian Crab or E-Crab). Other species are also kept as pets in other parts of the world, such as the Australian land hermit crab (*Coenobita variabilis*) or the strawberry land hermit crab (*Coenobita perlatus*). Care is required in choosing a potential pet. Check that all the legs are present (3 pairs of walking legs), the shell covering the head and thorax isn't damaged, there are no parasites / small bugs present, & that the crab is lively. If you already have a crab then it is important to match sizes pretty closely otherwise fighting may occur. Hermit crabs that are kept together may fight or kill a competitor to gain access to a shell they favor. A hermit crab with a shell that is too small is likely to be eaten if it cannot retract completely into the shell.

Housing



Land Hermit Crabs unique characteristics & low care requirements make them good pets.!

Hermit crabs do not need much room. A 10 gallon fish tank is fine, to start. You ideally want a tank or terrarium that you can mimic the crabs's natural environment with branches for the crab to climb & leafy areas to hide under. Crab environments need tight doors or lids to maintain security & moisture.

Your toad environment should include:

- **Substrate:** tank gravel or sand (smooth), pebbles, or soil with peat/vermiculite. Try for a 30% water, 70% land scenario.
- **Heating:** The temperature in your toads enclosure should be between 75 - 80 Fahrenheit. At night the temperature can drop as low as 68. An under tank heater can be used as the only source of heat by putting it on half the tank A combination of under tank heating &/or a low wattage basking light works well to maintain humidity. Heaters are important to help maintain the humidity & a basking spot is not required, as it would be in a lizzard environment.
- **Decoration:** Branches, vines, rocks, etc are good things to have in your enclosure to give your Crab something to climb on or under. Make sure to provide a variety of branches & live or artificial plants. Live plants to consider include philodendrons or sturdy ferns.
- **Water:** provide a large water dish with dechlorinated water. The tank should be misted with dechlorinated water daily to maintain humidity & water the live plants.

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Crab environments can be as complex as you want to make them. Ideally, the tank should be a pond landscape. Your tank can include sand & live ferns or grasses, stones & branches. They burrow or hide under the roots of large trees. Keeping Hermits is a great way for kids to learn about ecosystems. As pets they prefer a relative humidity level between 70% & 78%, & a temperature of 24°C (75°F) so you will need to keep the tank heated or in a warm spot & seal to retain the moisture. Although hermit crabs live on land, they have gills, rather than lungs. The high humidity of their native environments, plus water carried in the shell, allows their modified gills to remain wet & function properly in extracting oxygen from the air. You want to include a large shallow dish for the Crabs to soak in & to keep their tank environment moist. The dish may be set into a bedding material or sand. You want to have around 20-25% of the tank to be water. Place the water bowl at one end of the tank & build up your soil or substrate around it, leaving land at the other end. Buy a ten gallon tank for two, a 15 gallon tank for three to five crabs. Use a substrate (the stuff that lines the bottom of the tank) such as smooth sand or gravel, potting soil, moss, cedar bark, coconut bark or small pebbles. Mist your tank (& them) daily.

Make sure the water in the dish is dechlorinated by leaving a container of water out at least 24 hours. Chlorine in tap water can kill toads & must be left to evaporate (do NOT skip this step in their care). A small water dish is standard, as crabs like to bathe or soak in water periodically. Mist them occasionally along with the plants. You are trying to create an environment that is relatively warm & moist. A hermit will benefit from having live plants in their terrarium. Pothos are an excellent choice. Pothos can be left in pots, grown in jars of water or planted directly into soil on the bottom of the terrarium. The plants will provide the Crab with places to hide & help maintain high humidity. You can use a spray bottle to spray the tank & keep humidity up. Automatic humidifiers can be used as well. A small heater can be placed under the terrarium to insure that the temperature stays above 75 degrees Fahrenheit. A florescent light can be used during the day. UVA/UVB lighting is not needed although it doesn't hurt to use it anyway (no more than 10 hours a day). You should thoroughly clean the enclosure once a month to 6 weeks. Take every thing out & scrub it under hot water (no soap). Place the crab in a small container at this time. The tank itself will need to be cleaned too (hot water, no soap).



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