



## Goliath stick insect

### **Information**

The Goliath stick insect is a robust, bright green phasmid with yellow patches on the head, legs and thorax. Their bodies can reach up to 25cm in length. The Goliath has two pairs of bright green wings with red markings underneath. Adults change from brown to green at 10 -12 months of ages . The female Goliath is probably our heaviest stick insect in Australia. Goliath stick insects can be found throughout Northern Australia, into New South Wales and Victoria and also in Western Australia.

### **Housing**

A large fly-screen / mesh cage with a secure, fitted lid or door, at least 50cm in height and 40cm wide/deep. Large glass or plastic tanks are not ideal as they do not have adequate cross-ventilation and are rarely large enough. Stick insects are accomplished escape artists- so you must be careful not to leave any gaps. To prepare the cage for your stick insect, lay two sheets of newspaper on the floor of the cage so that they cover the whole floor. Fill a vase with water, and stick several small eucalyptus branches in so that the cut-off ends are submerged in the water. Make sure that these branches have fresh leaves on them for the stick insect to eat. Then place the vase, leaves and all, on the floor of the cage. You are now ready to introduce your goliath stick insect to its new home.

### **Feeding**

Spiny leaf insects are very low-maintenance pets. They will feed off the eucalyptus fresh broad-leafed Eucalyptus, Maleleuca, Wattle branches/leaves/branches until they become too dry. When the leaves dry out, remove them, change the newspaper on the floor, and put some new leaves into the vase. You may also need to top up the water in the vase, due to evaporation and the branches absorbing the water. You will need to change the leaves every few days.

Spiny leaf insects need fresh water every day, in the form of droplets sprayed on the leaves with your plant sprayer. Do NOT put a water dish in the cage, as the insects will not drink from it and might fall into it and drown.

### **Breeding**

The Goliath Stick Insect is considered parthenogenetic and does not need a male to reproduce. Males are much smaller than the female, fully winged and can fly short distances.

Whether you have a male or not, the eggs that your female stick insect lays will be fertile and will hatch 3-36 months later. By keeping the eggs in a container, they will be kept fresh and ready to hatch. Be aware that not every single hatchling will survive and many will die for a variety of reasons, some unknown. Do not allow the eggs to become sticky, wet or mouldy, and if they do, simply rinse them lightly with tap water, and place on a paper towel to dry. Once they have dried, return them to a clean dry dish with no lid. Then place this dish back

into the humid hatching tub that contains moist sand/peat moss on the floor. Be sure to remove any mould or fungal growth that may appear in and around your hatching tub. Each female Goliath should lay between 500-700 eggs in their adult lifetime. One way of encouraging eggs to hatch, is to soak them in water for several minutes. The water will turn orangey-brown. Rinse and repeat. A sudden surge of hatchlings should occur in the following days. Never leave eggs in the sun. Hatchlings are excellent escape-artists so ensure your hatchling enclosure is escape-proof. They can squeeze out of gaps 1mm+ wide.

### **Stick insect health**

A veterinarian cannot do anything for a sick insect, but there are effective ways of reducing the risk of sickness:

- 1: Keep the cage well aerated (this won't be a problem if you have a fly screen cage). This will help keep the air in the cage clean.
- 2: Keep the insects and the leaves away from any kind of chemical. Chemicals can poison the insect, which usually results in death.
- 3: Only spray the leaves lightly- don't soak them as the insects do not need very much water.

This will help prevent fungal growth on the leaves, which can spread to the exoskeleton of the insect. If you see fungal growth on the leaves, check the body of the stick insect for fungus as well. If you see any (it will usually grow on the underside of the insect) gently wipe it off with a damp paper towel. This will prevent the fungus from spreading to the internal organs of the insect which can cause death.

### **Handling**

Stick insects cannot bite, sting, or otherwise harm you, but female spiny leaf insects have spines on their undersides and legs that they may brush against you if they are handled roughly. All stick insects are delicate creatures, and should be handled carefully in order to prevent them from getting hurt.

