



SPINY LEAF STICK INSECT CARE SHEET

Housing

As a general rule, the cage should be at least 3 times as long as the adult insect. Adult females grow to about 110mm long so I would recommend a 40 cm by 30 cm by 30 cm cage.

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 spiny leaf insect to its new home.

Feeding

Spiny leaf insects are very low-maintenance pets. They will feed off the eucalyptus 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.

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.

To pick one up, place your hand above the stick insect (they have an instinct to climb) and gently nudge it from behind and below. This technique may not work with adult females, as they tend to hang upside down in one place and lay eggs. As a general rule, adult females should be handled with extreme care if you handle them at all.