

## Land Hermit Crab

### *Coenobita variabilis*



The Land Hermit Crab makes a wonderful pet. It is friendly, intelligent, odour free and very clean. This crab has evolved to live on land and uses an empty shell as a portable home, as well as for protection. **Remember—it is a Land Crab and must not be kept in water.**

#### Temperature

The Land Hermit Crab is tropical and is best kept at about 30°C. Do not let the temperature drop below 20°C. Heating can be provided by installing a low wattage globe over the top of the aquarium. Make sure a thermometer is used to monitor temperature. It is best to heat only one end of the enclosure as this will allow the crabs to select their preferred body temperature.

#### Food

A range of foods can be offered including fish pellets, cereal, bread, shredded coconut, apple and other varieties of fruit. Only put in small quantities at a time to ensure that it is fresh when eaten.

#### Water

Two bowls of water must be provided—one containing freshwater for drinking, the other containing seawater for bathing. (Synthetic sea salt can be used to make up the seawater. Use one level teaspoon (5cc) of synthetic sea salt per 100mls of fresh water.) A small amount of water is carried in the shell, and this is essential to the crabs well being. Ensure that the water bowls are sturdy and can not be tipped over. Keep the floor of the enclosure dry. Change the water frequently to keep it clean.

#### Moulting

Like other crabs, the land hermit crab needs to moult its outer shell, usually twice a year. During this period it will stop eating and may burrow. After it has moulted, the crab needs to be left alone for several weeks until its new shell hardens.

#### Extra Shells

The crab will climb out of its shell and “put on” a new one from time to time. Keep a few spare shells in the aquarium for this purpose. It is essential that your crab has a slightly larger one to put on after it has moulted

#### Habits

The land hermit crab is somewhat nocturnal by nature and will sleep during most of the day. Low temperature and low humidity will cause the crabs to be inactive and stressed. Crabs love company, get on well together and are most active when kept in a group. They are capable of inflicting a painful nip, but will tame over time.

#### Housing

Use an aquarium with a glass cover. Humidity of between 50-70% is essential to the crab's health. The floor of the aquarium should be kept dry and can be covered with shell grit, aquarium sand, or in winter coarse sawdust to keep them warm. A piece of driftwood or mangrove roots provides a great playground. Land hermit crabs love to climb.

These crabs are long lived and if cared for will live up to 15 years. What a great pet!

