



CARE GUIDE



PILLBUG

Invertebrate keeping guideline



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PILLBUG

Armadillidium vulgarelti



PROFILE

This species was introduced into Australia from Europe in the 19th century, and is now a common resident in gardens and disturbed areas of south eastern Australia. They are crustaceans with seven pairs of legs; one pair coming off each of the first seven segments of their body. The smaller segments near the tail don't have legs but have shorter limbs that act as lungs. For these to work properly (and for pillbugs to survive) they must remain in a moist environment, and for this reason are usually confined to damp habitats. They are generally nocturnal and live beneath rocks, logs and within compost, where they feed upon algae, wood, leaves and a wide variety of decaying material.

They are remarkable little animals and they have an exceptional defence; the ability to roll up into a tight ball. In this case their armoured body plates overlap and make them quite impenetrable to many small predators.

Like many other invertebrates, pillbugs shed their outer skeleton (exoskeleton) in order to grow, and do so a number of times to reach adult size. Individuals may live for two or three years, and females can have hundreds of offspring in that time. They breed when conditions are favourable, usually during summer, but may breed at other times also. A large number of eggs are carried in a special pocket on the underside of the female's body called the marsupium. The eggs remain here until they hatch into small white offspring. Young pillbugs are fully mobile and able to feed themselves soon after leaving their mother.

FOOD

Vegetable scraps such as potato and carrot peelings, leaf litter and other household compost. Minibeast Wildlife's Isopod food offered in a small dish (such as a bottle cap). Keep in mind that they are quite small animals and do not require large volumes of food.

WATER

Mist spray the substrate once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp, and the pillbugs will drink from the moisture in the ground. Ensure that the moisture does not become excessive (ie sodden or water logged).

ENCLOSURE

The enclosure needs to be about 10 cm H x 15 cm W x 20 cm L. Place the enclosure in a spot exposed to some daylight each day, but be careful it does not overheat or dry out in direct sunlight. You may place some objects such as a piece of bark or wood in the enclosure for the pillbugs to shelter under, or shallow layer of leaf litter. They will also dig into the ground to shelter.

CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

These animals are often used as a 'clean-up' crew in reptile enclosures, so they are pretty good at cleaning up after themselves. Remove any excessive mould or fungi growing in the enclosure, and change over the Isopod food every week, or earlier if it is eaten or gone mouldy.

SUBSTRATE

The base of the enclosure should be covered in a substrate of either soil or coco-peat (available from Minibeast Wildlife Bug shop) to a depth of 5cm. One end of this substrate always needs to be kept damp.

HANDLING

Pillbugs are totally harmless and can be handled safely. They should be picked up gently by their bodies, and carefully placed on the hand. Always wash your hands after handling animals.

TEMPERATURE

Pillbugs will do best at temperatures between 15-25°C.

COMMON ISSUES

Dehydration is the most common issue facing pillbugs in captivity. This can be avoided easily by keeping the substrate (soil or coco-peat) moist at all times.



Pillbugs prefer moist environments, and humidity levels of around 60-80% should be maintained.



2-3 years life span



These animals are captive bred, and should not be released into the wild.

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