MINIBEAST
WILDLIFE



# FIRE-BACK HUNTSMAN

*Invertebrate keeping guideline*

# FIRE-BACK HUNTSMAN
## *Beregama cordata*



## PROFILE

Fire-back Huntsmen are one of Australia's more colourful huntsmen. The females attain an orange colouration as they near maturity, whereas the males remain brown throughout life. They are found in the rainforests of northern Australia. They tend to move about within the foliage as well on the trunks of rainforest trees. They create retreats within trees by binding one or more leaves together with silk. Prey consists of a wide range of other invertebrates including moths, crickets, cockroaches and other spiders.

Like other huntsman, these spiders are extremely fast, and have the ability to run sideways and squeeze into very narrow crevices. They are covered in fine sensory hairs which are extremely sensitive to air movement. This assists them in detecting the movement of prey and the approach of predators.

Females produce a disc-like white silk egg sac within their leafy retreat and stay with their eggs until after they hatch. The young emerge 30 - 60 days after being laid (they will develop faster in warmer conditions) and several hundred spiderlings may emerge from a single egg sac. The spiderlings will cluster around their mother for a week or two after they emerge before dispersing as independent hunters.

These spiders grow by shedding their outer skeleton (exoskeleton). This process is called ecdysis or moulting. To moult successfully they need to hang uninterrupted beneath a leaf or branch. Their colour darkens and they stop feeding a few days before moulting, and once they begin to moult they usually complete the process in about 10 minutes. They usually will not feed for about 24 hours after moulting. Males and females can be identified as they mature; males have enlarged bulbs on the ends of their pedipalps (feelers) which females lack, and males tend to have thin bodies and longer legs. The females tend to be more colourful (pictured above), whereas males are often more brownish in colour.

## FOOD

Live insects. Crickets, cockroaches, moths and flies are ideal. The food insects should be no larger than 1/3 of the size of your spider. Feeding twice a week is recommended, but young spiders will feed more often when they are growing. Remove live insects from your enclosure if your spider has not eaten them within 12 hours.

## WATER

Mist spray lightly around your spider every second day – it will drink the droplets.

## ENCLOSURE

The enclosure needs to be large enough to allow your spider to shed its exoskeleton properly. An ideal enclosure should be higher than it is wide, as Fire-Back Huntsmen like to climb upwards. Minibeast Wildlife's pop-up mesh enclosures or Nano Habitat is ideal. Some broad leafy plants are ideal additions and will allow the spider to create a natural silk-bound leaf retreat. Flat pieces of bark are also useful additions to give the spider something to climb on and hide behind. Ensure the enclosure is not placed in direct sunlight as this may cause it to overheat. Make sure there is plenty of ventilation in your enclosure but ensure there are no gaps which allow the spider to get out.

## CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Remove any food waste that has fallen to the bottom of the enclosure.

## SUBSTRATE

Damp coco-peat to help soak up any excess moisture and maintain humidity. Leaf litter can be used in addition.

## HANDLING

Direct handling is not recommended. Although these spiders are not dangerously venomous and quite timid, adults do have large fangs and could give a painful bite. If you need to transfer them, they can be easily guided into a jar or plastic container.

## TEMPERATURE

This species will do best at 24 – 28 degrees C, but will tolerate 16 – 24 degrees and have a slower growth rate.

## COMMON ISSUES

Due to their flattened bodies and fast speed, these spiders are excellent escape artists! Ensure there are no gaps around the lid or doors of your enclosure and take care not to allow your spider to run out when opening it.

60-80%

1-2 years life span

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