

Terrestrial Invertebrate Safety

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for medical diagnosis. If you suspect you or a family member may be infected seek medical attention.

Additional information can be found at the Centers for Disease Control at cdc.gov/healthypets/ and petco.com/caresheet or contact your local veterinarian or family physician.

Terrestrial invertebrates - Tarantulas and Scorpions - don't require a lot of handling. In fact, it is recommended to handle them as little as possible. When you do need to handle them for certain tasks, such as cleaning their habitat, it is important to keep in mind a few safe handling tips in order to reduce the risk of toxin exposure. Tarantulas and Scorpions have toxins for defensive purposes and exposure to such toxins can cause an allergic reaction in people. Women who are pregnant, children under the age of 5, and people with weakened immune systems should consult their physician before handling a terrestrial invertebrate.

Taking these simple precautions can keep you from becoming infected:

- **Tarantula** A Tarantula bite can be venomous and can cause an allergic reaction in people. Take great care not to provoke a cornered or hungry tarantula as this increases your risk of venom exposure. In addition to their bite, tarantulas have urticating (itch-causing) hairs on their abdomens which they release by vigorously rubbing their abdomen when threatened. These tiny hairs are barbed and can work their way into the skin causing an allergic reaction. If these hairs get into the eye, they can easily penetrate the eye and cause inflammation.
- **Scorpion** A scorpion stings from the stinger at the end of its tail. Scorpion stings are venomous and can cause an allergic reaction in people similar to a bee sting. Take great care not to provoke a cornered or hungry scorpion.

How to avoid toxin exposure:

- Handle tarantulas and scorpions as infrequently as possible.
- The best method to move a tarantula or scorpion is to place a cup to the side of the tarantula or scorpion and use the cup to gently herd them into a corner of their habitat. Once the tarantula or scorpion is in place you can gently move them into the cup and transfer them to an alternate habitat. Blowing gently on a tarantula will cause them to move away from the direction of the breeze.
- Never attempt to pick up a tarantula that is flicking its abdomen hairs or is rearing with its mouth parts exposed.
- Always wash hands thoroughly, before and after handling, with antibacterial soap and water.

What to do if bitten, stung or exposed to urticating hairs:

- Immediately wash the exposed area with hot water and antibacterial soap. Try to use the hottest water temperature without burning your skin. Hot water works best to help neutralize the venom.
- If you are exposed to urticating hairs, wash the area with hot water and antibacterial soap. Do not touch your face or eyes until you have medical help to remove all of the hairs.
- Seek medical attention if you believe you are having an allergic reaction or if you have been exposed to urticating hairs.
- If seeking medical attention, be sure to write down the species of terrestrial invertebrate you were exposed in order to ensure proper treatment.