

Curly Hair Tarantula

(*Brachypelma albopilosum*)

Class: *Arachnida*

Order: *Aranea*

Family: *Therapsidae*

Characteristics: Growing up to 2.8 in long with a leg span of 5.8 in, curly hair tarantulas are plump and covered with dark, brown to black bristles and a golden-bronze sheen from bristles that cover the body. Males are often a lighter bronze color than females. Like all spiders, tarantulas have 8 legs and 4 appendages near their mouths. They have two leg-like pedipalps they use to hold and carry prey items, transport eggs, or dig burrows. They also have two fang-tipped appendages called *chelicerae* that strike downward to inject venom. As a result of a hard and inflexible exoskeleton that cannot accommodate a growing spider, they must periodically molt the old exoskeleton and grow a new one - usually once or twice a year. They have simple eyes that can detect variations in light.

Behavior: As a nocturnal hunter, the curly hair rapidly darts out of a burrow and seizes passing prey detected by the sensitive hairs on its legs. Holding prey with its pedipalps, it injects powerful venom which first paralyzes prey and then begins digestion. Once liquefied it sucks up the protein and fats of the prey leaving behind a pile of undigested body parts. The venom is rarely toxic to humans. Tarantulas have the ability to spin silk which they used to line burrows and protect eggs rather than for webs.

Reproduction: Females mature at 3-4 years, males slightly younger. Receptive females will allow a male to mate, usually during the rainy season, resulting in an egg sac containing 300 - 500 eggs laid several weeks later. The sac is incubated in her nest for about 7-8 weeks. Spiderlings develop quickly and then disperse to live independently. Unreceptive females are likely to be aggressive toward approaching males and may try to kill and eat them.

Diet:

Wild: Insects, small vertebrates

Zoo: Crickets

Conservation: Listed in APPENDIX II by CITIES, the largest threat is habitat loss. Once captured in large numbers for the international pet trade, they can now only be traded internationally with appropriate permits according to quotas. As a result, they are now bred in captivity worldwide and few are caught in the wild.



Range & Habitat:

Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua in scrubland, at the base of large trees, near rivers, or in patches of cleared rain forest



Lifespan: Male 5-10 years in captivity. Females up to 20 yrs in captivity. Life span in the wild unknown.

Special Adaptations: Sensitive hair on legs to detect vibrations of prey or predators.

IUCN Conservation Status:

