



Mexican Red Knee

(Brachypelma Smithi)

Most info on this care sheet applies to many arid to semi arid species of tarantula.

Adult Size	4.5-5.5 inches	Life Span	Males 10 years / Females 15-25 years
Male/Female Differences	If there is access to a shed skin, look inside on the abdomen, just about where it meets the carapace, if a female spider, a prominent structure known as the spermathecae which is basically a sperm receptacle. A male spider will clearly not have this present. The spermathecae, or lack of it, is clearly visible to the naked eye if the spider is large enough, although a microscope or strong magnifying glass will be needed for a spiderling. The easiest method of identifying are mature males and their “bulbs” on the end of the front most feelers. Sometimes a “hook” on the underside of the first leg is also be indication of a male specimen.		
Compatibility	Tarantulas should never be housed with cage mates.		
Origin	Found along the central Pacific coast of Mexico, from southern coastal Jalisco to north-western Oaxaca State and inland to the states of Mexico and Morelos.		
Climate	Dry areas with little vegetation. Scrubland/deserts/dry thorn forests.		
Day Cycle	Nocturnal.		
Temperature	75-80 degrees		
Lighting	Tarantulas prefer low lighting. No special lighting is needed, however an infrared light can be used, however tarantulas are prone to drying out, so use with caution.		
Humidity	40%-60%. A shallow water dish in which a sponge or paper towel is		

	always kept damp, but never saturated, will help achieve this.
Habitat/Territory	They are a terrestrial, burrowing species and require deeper substrate rather than height to climb. Do make sure that your lid can be securely attached as they will escape given the chance.
Substrate/Bedding	3+ inches of combined peat/sphagnum moss along with a soil substrate.
Hiding Place/Den	Provide plenty of hides such as half logs and if adding plants find those that would be found in their natural habitat. (Cacti)
Cage Type	A single adult Mexican Red Knee tarantula requires a 20 square foot aquarium; the focus of the aquarium should be more on length and width than on height. However, the aquarium should be high enough that the spider can not touch the top as they are notorious escape artists. Contrary to most animal setups, tarantulas prefer smaller enclosures.
Diet	Insectivorous
Supplements	Very lightly sprinkle vitamin and calcium powder on insects - make sure to avoid overdosing. Gutload crickets to ensure all nutrition requirements are met.
Diet Precautions	Do not feed while your pet is molting. Even one cricket can kill your pet while it molts it's skin. Too large a prey can harm your pet, adhere to guidelines in the feeding selection below.
Feeding	A live invertebrate prey item of approximately half of the spider's body length is required. You can choose to feed crickets, locusts, mealworms, or even cockroaches. Wingless fruit flies are also a good option for feeding spiderlings. Approximately 4 or 5 food items of an appropriate size should be offered per week, they can be offered all in one go but if they have not been consumed within 24 hours they should be removed and you should try feeding again in a week's time.
Water Source	Only a small shallow water dish should be provided. Never saturated, but always damp. Misting is not typically needed.
Grooming	To grow, your Mexican Red Knee grows a new skin below its current exoskeleton, when the spider has grown sufficiently it will need to break out of its old exoskeleton. This is called molting. At this time your spider will show less interest in its food and will appear to be being very lazy. You will also probably see your spider laying on its back, it is VERY important that you do not touch your spider when it is laying like this, you also need to remove all uneaten prey items from the enclosure as gently and quietly as you possibly can. The spider will eventually split open its old exoskeleton and wriggle its way out. The spider's nice new exoskeleton will still be very soft and you will more than likely see it just

sitting still as it hardens. Only remove the shed exoskeleton when your spider is again actively walking around its enclosure or has returned to its hide. You should also not offer any food items to your Mexican Red Knee for a week as your spider's skin and fangs will still be rather soft so it will not be able to eat.

Oral and Foot Care

Provided proper humidity to ensure clean molting.

Proper Handling

To handle your spider and to minimise the risks the best way is to have a paint brush or another soft item available to gently push your spider. Now, place your hand palm up so that your spider's head is facing you, if it shows any threatening signs, such as rearing up with its front legs... stop, the spider does not want to be handled. Next, using the paintbrush you need to gently prod the abdomen or rear feet of your Mexican Red Knee, you will either see the spider walk forwards, rear up or spray urticating hairs. If your spider has now walked onto your hand you should lift your hand slowly out of the enclosure and allow the spider to walk from hand to hand. Keep your movements slow and try not to breathe on the spider, this should help to keep your Mexican Red Knee calm and not spook it. Until you grow in confidence it would be advisable to keep your hands close to a table or bed so that if you drop it you will lessen any possible damage caused. Tarantulas are fragile and should never be dropped. A primary cause of domesticated spiders is their soft abdomens splitting on impact for too high a fall.

Habitat Maintenance

Spot clean soiled areas and plants. Every few months replace substrate to prevent mold and bacteria from growing.

Health Concerns

Tarantulas are very hardy species and any health complications aside from molting are the result of environmental stress. Thankfully this can be fixed quickly by identifying the cause and applying a remedy. Whether parasites, change in temperature, or not enough burrowing space, make sure to provide the correct conditions to keep a happy healthy pet. A tarantula on its back is probably not sick. Most tarantula species flip onto their backs during molting. Though this is a very stressful and delicate time for tarantulas, if the humidity and warmth levels are correct, they will molt their exoskeleton, roll over, harden up, and within a week or two be ready for their next meals.
