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Tarantula kept in classroom

Posted by Anonymous on Fri, 2015-11-06 15:16

Tarantula kept in classroom: Is it perfectly okay to keep a tarantula in a locked container in the classroom?

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

7

8

9

10

Senior Secondary

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Tarantula kept in classroom

Submitted by on 18 November 2015

Answer reviewed 25th January 2023

Australian Tarantulas may be kept in the classroom, subject to the regulations in your state/territory. These regulations may be covered in information concerning animal ethics and/or the government department that manages wildlife in your state/territory. See the following Science ASSIST Information Sheet for links to state and territory websites that contain support material regarding animal ethics and licensing,

[AIS: Links – Support for school science](#).¹ It is important to access the latest information available, which may mean directly contacting the relevant person in the correct department.

This question has been asked in Western Australia, where a permit is required from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). Current information and [links to forms for WA](#)² can be found on their website. If tarantulas are imported into WA from other states, this also requires an import licence. There is also a requirement to have a written plan detailing an educational program. Schools in other states should investigate current requirements for their jurisdiction.

Science ASSIST recommends the following:

- Containment of the tarantula is a major consideration and schools should have this aspect addressed well in advance of the acquisition of a tarantula.
- Any study should be observational only as the spider is very delicate and can inflict a nasty bite, capable of causing nausea and vomiting. There should be **no** direct contact by students, which includes feeding and cleaning of the housing.
- Consideration could be given to observing tarantulas in zoos such as the nocturnal house at Perth Zoo.
- Consideration could also be given to the use of alternate invertebrates, such as stick insects.

General considerations for using animals in schools:

Science ASSIST recommends that prior to embarking on any activity that involves the use of live animals that consideration be given to the following:

- The educational outcome from holding the animal in captivity. Can the same outcome be achieved without keeping the animal in the classroom? Are alternatives available such as visiting a museum or zoo?
- Any ethical issues, such as the impact of captivity on the welfare of the animal.
- Are any permits or licences required?
- Who will be responsible for the handling and care?
- The number required? Use as few as are necessary.

If it is determined that the animal will be obtained and kept in the classroom then the following should be considered:

- purchase from a reputable supplier;
- reference material/guidelines should be consulted with regard to proper care, including an appropriate diet;
- an environment be provided and maintained as close as possible to the natural habitat. This includes suitable environmental conditions such as temperature, lighting and humidity. The specimen should also be protected from any climate extremes;
- the enclosure be large enough for the well-being of the animal;
- the enclosure should be kept clean, well ventilated, escape proof and secure from other animal interference;
- the amount of student interaction in the care of the animal;
- a program be instigated for the care to continue over weekends and during holiday periods. Students should not be allowed to take the animal home, unless written approval is obtained;
- a record should be maintained of the upkeep and animal behaviour. Look for any signs of distress or pain;
- a plan should be in place for the fate of the animal at the completion of the activity.

Keeping tarantulas:

In addition to general considerations of keeping animals, the following should be considered:

- the likelihood of the spider escaping;
- the likelihood of students removing the cage;
- the consequences to human health;
- the consequences to other animals such as dogs.

A site-specific risk assessment should be performed prior to purchasing a tarantula to ascertain the hazards, the likelihood and consequences of those hazards occurring, and if sufficient control measures are able to be put into place. Science ASSIST has developed a [risk assessment template](#)³ which can be used for this task.

Additional Information:

Australian tarantulas:

- have an average body length of 6 cm, a leg span of 16 cm and their fangs are up to 1 cm long;
- females may live up to twelve years, but the males usually die after mating at around five years of age. Females tend to be larger than males;
- are not usually aggressive, but can deliver a painful bite. Though not usually fatal to humans, at least one case has been reported that resulted in severe illness;
- can deliver a fatal bite to dogs and cats;
- should not be handled, and great care taken when cleaning their containers;
- should be housed in an environment that is safe and secure.

References and further information:

¹ Science ASSIST website, (2022, August), '*AIS information sheet: support for school science*', retrieved from <https://assist.asta.edu.au/resource/4798/science-assist-information-sheet-support-school-science>

² Government of WA, Department of biodiversity, conservation and attractions website, (2022, July 4), '*Licences and permits*', retrieved from <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/licences-and-permits>

³ Science ASSIST website, (2014, July), '*Risk assessment template*', retrieved from <https://assist.asta.edu.au/resource/2298/risk-assessment-template>

Pet Magic website, (2023), '*Tarantula*', retrieved from <https://petmagic.com.au/pages/tarantula>

Australian museum website, (2022, July, 25), '*Australian tarantulas*', retrieved from <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/spiders/australian-tarantulas/>

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Government of WA, Perth Zoo website, (accessed 2023, January 25), '*Australian Tarantula*', retrieved from <https://perthzoo.wa.gov.au/animal/australian-tarantula>

Queensland government, Department of environment and science, (2021, October 6), '*Tarantulas*', retrieved from <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/animals/living-with/tarantulas>

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