

# Caring for your stick insect

**How to keep pet stick insects  
healthy and happy**



**Notcutts**

GARDEN INSPIRATION SINCE 1897

# Caring for your stick insect



## Are stick insects right for me?

Keeping stick insects as pets can be great fun. They are particularly good for children as they are easy to look after, provided they are handled with care and under supervision.

There are nearly 3,000 known types of stick insect but the most common types to be kept as pets are Indian or Laboratory.

If looked after well, your stick insect should live up to a year after hatching but life expectancy varies by species.

Stick insects can be quite fascinating to watch, especially when they shed their 'exoskeleton' which will happen several times throughout their life in order for them to grow.

## Choosing a new pet stick insect

If you are new to keeping stick insects then we recommend an Indian stick as they are easy to handle and are suitable for all ages.

## The first few days

Stick insects are very delicate and should be handled with great care. They can be picked up with an implement such as a paintbrush.

Transport them home in a sturdy ventilated container with some of the leaves from their cage at the pet centre.

When they arrive home, carefully place them into their cage with the paintbrush and leave them to discover their new environment.

We recommend that you keep handling to a minimum during the first few days until your stick is settled into his cage.

## Creating a happy home

There are about twenty varieties of stick insect which are widely kept as pets. These can be divided into two groups: those that need lots of ventilation and those that require more humid conditions.

A tall bug cage with good ventilation or a plastic aquarium with a fitted top make good homes for stick insects. Grip mesh can be attached to the sides to give them a climbing surface.

Whichever home you choose for your stick insects, it should be cleaned weekly. Heating is not needed but your insect's home should be kept at average room temperature. Window sills should be avoided as they can become very hot in the afternoon and cold at night.

If keeping Indian stick insects, their cage should contain bramble or hedge cuttings which provide food and a natural habitat. The cuttings should be sprayed daily with water so the insects can drink the droplets from the leaves.



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## A healthy diet and treats

Stick insects are strictly vegetarians.

Blackberry bramble leaves are a good food for stick insects and should be replaced twice a week before they go dry and brown. They will also eat privet and ivy leaves. Keep the twigs fresh by standing them in a flower pot with wet oasis inside.

Many varieties of stick insect also eat eucalyptus leaves.

For specific advice on a good healthy diet for your particular stick insect, our pet centre team will be happy to help.

## Getting to know you

Stick insects must be handled very gently. When handling, do not press on their bodies as this could cause damage.

The easiest way to handle stick insects is to encourage them to walk on to your hand or a leaf, and then gently withdraw it from the cage. With larger stick insects, they may be very gently grasped either side of the middle of the body (thorax) avoiding the legs. They can also be picked up by the tail.

We advise against handling stick insects that have recently shed their skin as their new skin will take several hours to harden.

## How your stick insect might behave

If a walking stick insect damages or loses a leg it will grow back after several successive molts.

Stick insects blend into their surroundings to fool predators. They also sway to mimic the effect of wind on vegetation. If disturbed, they may drop to the ground like a dead insect.

Stick insects can produce young without mating and some populations consist entirely of mature females and their offspring, all exact replicas of each other.

Some stick insects can change their colour to suit their surroundings, just like chameleons.

Stick insects have suckers and claws on their feet which allows them to walk up vertical walls and even upside down.

## Stick insects and other pets

Given enough room, stick insects will live happily in pairs or in small groups. Different species can be kept together as can both sexes.



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## Stick insect skin shedding

Young stick insects (nymphs) shed their skins regularly as they grow. When the old skin is preparing to shed, your insect will become less active and often hang upside down from a branch or from the side of the bug cage so do not be alarmed when you see this happening.

## Potential health issues with stick insects

Stick insects are not prone to illness in captivity unless they are kept in overcrowded or insanitary conditions.

If concerned, please visit our pet centre team or seek veterinary advice.

## Your new pet checklist

- Bug cage or plastic aquarium with lid and grip mesh
- Pot with oasis
- Fine mist dispenser

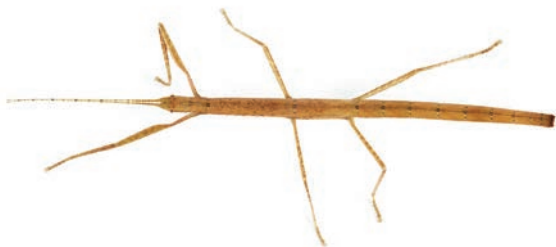


# Help and further advice

If you have any questions about caring for your pet, our fully trained team are happy to help if they can, or advise on where to find more specialist information.

Whilst there is a wealth of information available online, only a professional will be able to correctly answer your query. If in doubt, call your local vet for an appointment.

It is against the law to release, or allow to escape, non-native animals or birds. If you have trouble caring for any animals contact our team for advice.



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