

# IMPERIAL SCORPION

The Imperial or Emperor scorpion as it is sometimes known is a large black scorpion. Scientific name *Pandinus imperator*. Although quite gruesome looking at first sight, they are rather beautiful in their own way. This scorpion is an active creature, especially at night and fascinating to watch.

## HOUSING

Unlike most other scorpions the Imperial scorpion can be housed together, they seem to like living in a group. However I have found that when setting up a group together it is not uncommon for one or two individuals to be killed before they settle down and live in harmony. I keep Imperial scorpions in a large fish tank. However many hideaways I give them they usually crowd into the same area. Humidity is important so I have a lid on the tank with very little ventilation. Warmth is also important, I use a heat mat taped to the back of the tank which is kept at about 25c. On the bottom of the tank I place about 10cm of peat and then provide pieces of bark and coconut shells to hide under. Imperial scorpions drink readily so I always provide them with a dish of water. Sometimes a scorpion will sit in the water dish so it needs to be large enough to get into.

## FEEDING

Scorpions will only eat live food, I feed mine mostly crickets, but they will happily eat locusts, cockroaches, mealworms etc. Tubs of crickets can be purchased from many pet shops and also by mail order. I feed my scorpions once a week and also change the water. If only one scorpion is kept it will probably eat about three crickets a week, it is said that scorpions can be overfed. I have never known this, but it is probably just as well not to put too many crickets in the tank at one time. If there are lots of crickets running around this could irritate the scorpions.

## BREEDING

I have successfully bred Imperial scorpions for several years now. I place a ceramic tile in my scorpion tank as I have read that it is important to have a flat surface for the mating courtship to take place. I have never seen this courtship “dance”, but scorpions are very secretive and this probably only takes place at night. I have also never seen a scorpion shed its skin, this also seems to take place at night and under cover rather than out in the open. I feel that the female scorpion once mated will only produce her young when conditions are right. I have often had obviously pregnant females not produce young until I have raised the humidity in the tank. The number of young seems to vary a great deal, sometimes there are a few and at other times over 20. The young are white and live on their mothers back for several weeks. Imperial scorpions are wonderful mothers, they move the young around very gently with their claws and feed them from their own mouths. I love watching the females with babies, but of course they should not be disturbed too much. Humidity is very important when the young are born or they will desiccate very easily. Imperial scorpions can be sexed by holding the scorpion up in the air and looking at the pectines underneath (feathery projections on the underside). This is best carried out by lifting the scorpion by the base of its tail with a long pair of tweezers. Imperial scorpions are only mildly venomous. Their sting is said to be like a wasp sting, however I expect their large claws could give a nasty nip. The pectines are considerably longer on the male. To the untrained eye it is necessary to have both a male and a female to compare the difference.