



pets in the  
classroom

CARE SHEET

# Hissing Cockroach

The Hissing Cockroach (*Gromphadorhina portentosa*) is native to Madagascar, an island off the east coast of Africa, and live in the leaf litter of the forests. Life expectancy on average is two to five years. They get their name due to the hissing sound they make. To create this sound, they force air through spiracles, the respiratory openings on their abdomen. Typically, they generate this hissing sound when disturbed, during mating, and when fighting.



## HOUSING

An adult Madagascar hissing cockroach habitat should be kept in a 5-gallon tank or larger, with a screen top to keep them secure and prevent them from escaping. Suitable substrates are peat moss, wood chips, or sphagnum moss. Hissing cockroaches are indigenous to tropical rain forest areas of Madagascar, so it is important that they are provided a temperature range of 77°F-82°F during the day and 70°F-75°F at night. This is necessary for the metabolism and immune system to function properly. If you want to induce breeding, keep habitat temperature 80°F-85°F.

They should also be kept at moderate to high levels of humidity. To ensure proper humidity levels, the enclosure should be lightly misted with water daily.

## ENVIRONMENT

Habitat temperatures should range from 70°F to 85°F and should be measured with a digital thermometer. The humidity should be maintained at 60%-80%. The substrate should be moistened but never fully soaked and not allowed to fully dry. A shallow, low-sided water bowl with a sponge kept wet is ideal. Always use dechlorinated water as tap water contains chlorine and chloramine that can be harmful to your hissing cockroach. You may need a small reptile heat mat to warm the tank, but it will depend on your room temperatures. It is best to use a heat pad with a thermostat to avoid overheating your cockroach.

## CARE

Hissing cockroaches are semi-social, they tend to do better in a colony, but they can be kept individually. If several are kept together, be sure to keep more females than males, as males

are territorial and can attack other males. To reduce fighting, you can add more hiding places in the habitat, this way the hissing cockroach can easily claim their own territory. Females are ovoviviparous, producing eggs that hatch within the female's body. The female carries the

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eggs and neonate nymphs for approximately 60 days until they emerge as first instar nymphs. One female can produce as many as 30-60 nymphs. This insect has an incomplete life cycle: egg, nymphs and adult stages. The nymphs undergo 6 molts before reaching maturity in 7 months. The nymphs and adults are wingless and can live for 2 to 5 years.

Hissing cockroaches are herbivorous and there are a number of commercial foods available. Supplement the diet with fruits and vegetables, including banana peels, orange slices, sweet potato peelings, carrots, apples, grapes, potato slices, leafy vegetables like kale, collard greens, and romaine lettuce. Replace all foods regularly to avoid spoilage in their tank. When feeding, sprinkle the food with a calcium supplement.

## Daily

- Water bowl and sponge should be cleaned daily, refilling with dechlorinated water.
- Lightly mist the habitat at least twice during the day to maintain necessary humidity levels. Tank humidity should ideally stay between 60% and 80%.
- Check habitat's ambient temperature to confirm it is within the acceptable range of 70°F to 85°F. Check heating pad to make sure it is operating properly.

## Monthly

- Change the habitat's substrate monthly. You will need to remove your hissing cockroach, gently picking it up and placing it in a suitable container, always wear disposable gloves when handling them or cleaning the tank.
- Thoroughly scrub the habitat with a mixture of 10% bleach and 90% hot water or distilled vinegar 50% and water 50%. Clean any décor with same solution.
- Rinse habitat two to three times with tap water to completely remove any cleaning residue. Wipe habitat and décor dry with paper towels. Add new substrate and décor back to the habitat. Then return the cockroaches to their home.

## HELPFUL LINKS

How to supplement calcium:

<https://www.zillarules.com/all-products/vitamins-supplements-care/calcium-supplement-spray>

Additional clean water sources:

<https://flukerfarms.com/cricket-quencher/>

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