

Praying Mantis

A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

Immediate Care and Handling

Set the habitat in a temperature-stable area free from cold drafts and drastic temperature changes. The habitat should have screen with a fine mesh that will prevent fruit flies (food for the mantis nymphs) from escaping. Use a clean aquarium or mesh-sided butterfly sanctuary. Place in the habitat some dried sticks (with or without leaves) and real or artificial plants on which the mantises will climb and hide. Nymphs dry out easily, so be prepared to mist them daily or provide a watering station using room-temperature spring water.

Habitat Setup and Maintenance

Upon receipt, remove egg case(s) from any shipping packaging. Place the egg case(s) inside the habitat, remembering to close the habitat door. Keep the habitat temperature at 72–78° F (22–26° C). If the temperature oscillates or does not remain near optimum, it can take longer for the nymphs to emerge.

Mist the habitat once a day (or as needed when the habitat becomes dry) with room-temperature spring water. Do not use tap water or distilled water. Do not allow the spray bottle or water container to come into contact with any soap or detergents.

Hatching can take 2 to 8 weeks at optimal temperatures. Each egg case can have 10–150 nymphs that will emerge all at once. Mortality is high in the early stages of development and during the molting process.

Feed flightless fruit flies to the nymphs for the first few months of life, starting 1 to 2 days after emergence. Feed every other day for the first 2 to 3 months. Mantis nymphs will begin to attack and consume their siblings after about a week unless they are divided into individual containers and maintained separately.

Continue to mist the habitat daily or place a watering station (shallow dish with sponge or cotton balls) inside the habitat, as the nymphs will actively seek and drink water. Change the water daily because fruit flies will also be attracted to the water source and will foul it.

After the mantis has completed its 5th molt, supply cricket nymphs as a food source. Wait until after the 7th molt to provide adult crickets as food because a strong cricket can easily attack and kill a mantis. The mantis life span can be a few days to 6 months, as the mantis requires 7 to 9 molts to reach adult size.

FAQs

My egg case hasn't hatched and it's been 8 weeks. What do I do?

First, verify that your habitat and egg case are in an area at a constant 72–78° F (22–26° C). Also make certain that the habitat and egg case have been misted with room-temperature spring water to maintain humidity. Wait 2 more weeks. If the egg case doesn't hatch after 10 weeks, call Carolina's Customer Care Representatives (800.334.5551) and have your order number ready.

My mantis egg case(s) have gotten wet. Will this hurt them?

No. The egg case is intended to survive the cold and wet of autumn and winter months. In nature, the female mantis breeds and lays her egg cases on tree branches in late summer or early autumn. The female dies soon after. Over winter, the egg case(s) endure wet, freezing temperatures. Then when weather and light

conditions are right, the nymphs emerge and disperse. Wait until the habitat begins to dry out before misting the case(s) again, to prevent the growth of mold.

How soon do my mantises need fruit flies?

Within 1 or 2 days of hatching. If your mantis nymphs are in a small habitat, they likely will start to eat their siblings due to hunger and overcrowding. Do not feed the nymphs anything larger than fruit flies until after the 5th molt, as a large prey can easily kill a small mantis. Use fruit flies for several months. If you wish to raise your own fruit flies, we suggest item #172900, Fruit Fly Culture Kit, to maintain a sufficient culture of flightless fruit flies (item #172910).

Which is better, fruit flies that can fly or flightless fruit flies?

While hunting and obtaining food is an innate instinct in mantis young, they still require time to learn how to find, attack, and capture their food. Flightless fruit flies can only hop or crawl away from their predator, whereas fruit flies that can fly will escape, leaving hungry mantises in their wake.

How do I feed flightless fruit flies to my mantises?

Gently tap the bottom of the vial of fruit flies on a tabletop to knock them away from the opening. Quickly open the habitat, remove the plug from the vial, and shake several fruit flies into the habitat. Replace the plug on the vial of flies and close the habitat door. Keep the vial of fruit flies at room temperature with the plug in place. The media at the bottom of the vial contains eggs and larvae that will later grow into flies. When the media in the bottom begins to dry out or grow mold, discontinue use and switch to a new vial of flightless fruit flies.

Can I use tap water with the mantises?

No. Tap water contains chlorine that will kill the mantises. Use room-temperature spring water easily obtained at your local grocery store. Be sure it has no additives for taste or added fluoride.

Do mantises still need to be misted after they emerge from the egg case?

Yes. The mantises will dry out if they do not receive moisture. Gently mist them every day with spring water in a spray bottle or provide a watering station (a shallow dish with cotton balls and spring water). If mold begins to grow, change out the watering station and remove any dead fruit flies.

How long will it take the mantises to molt their exoskeleton?

It can take 9–15 days between molts, depending on temperature and humidity. A mantis requires 7–9 molts to reach adulthood. The molting process is difficult for the mantis and sometimes results in death if it cannot emerge completely out of its old exoskeleton or if its habitat is too dry. Mantises tend to stop eating a day prior and for 1 day after molting. They also suspend themselves upside-down inside the habitat.

When can I give my mantis crickets or cricket nymphs?

Wait until after the 5th molt before giving the mantis any cricket nymphs. Then wait until after the 7th molt to provide adult crickets. Remove any crickets from the habitat during molting, as the crickets will attack and eat the defenseless mantis as it molts.

How many mantises will survive until adulthood?

If the mantises are separated and daily maintained, 1 or 2 per egg case may live for 6 to 7 months. However, you should expect high mortality throughout their life cycle.

My mantises died suddenly overnight. Why?

Unfortunately, death can occur for a variety of reasons, some known and some unknown. Check the room temperature, type of water used in the habitat, and humidity. Sometimes mantises die and there is no

obvious explanation.

Is it okay to release my mantises? If so, where should I place them?

Always check with your local agriculture extension agency to be sure it's okay to release mantises in your area. If so, release them in a garden area near shrubs and plants. Be sure other insects are active since the mantis will need live prey to eat. The temperature outdoors should be at least 60° F (16° C) and the last chance of frost should have passed. If mantises cannot be released in your area, maintain them in habitats until they die a natural death or, as a last resort, humanely dispose of them.

Problems? We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

Orders and replacements: 1-800-334-5551 then select Customer Service

Technical Support and Questions: caresheets@carolina.com



© 2010 Carolina Biological Supply Company