

Common Name: Chilean Rose Tarantula

Scientific Name: *Grammostola rosea*



IUCN Red list Status: Not listed
AZA Conservation Program: None

Class: Arachnida
Order: Araneae
Family: Theraphosidae
Genus: Grammostola

Habitat: These spiders can be found in dry scrubland and deserts in Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina. Lives in shallow burrows or trees in these areas.

Threats in the Wild: Predators include large mammals, reptiles, birds, other tarantulas (most species are cannibalistic), and the pepsis-hunting wasp. This species is commonly teased out of its burrows by children, and exported to the U.S. and Europe by the thousands for the pet trade.

Physical Characteristics: This spider, although large, is considered a medium-sized member of the tarantula family and is 4.5 to 5.5 inches long. A robust hairy spider, it is dark brown with tan to pink hairs covering its body, which serve as important sensory receptors. Some hairs may detect vibrations; others may detect temperature or smell. As defense, this spider can kick barbed hairs off its abdomen, which contain mild venom. Since they are nocturnal, their tiny eyes are only used to judge light levels. A spider's body consists of two sections: a head and thorax (called a *cephalothorax*) and an abdomen. Like all spiders, a tarantula has no inner skeleton to support its body, but has an outer skin that is tough and flexible. This skin is shed as the spider grows, and a new skin takes its place. (This is called *molting*.)

Reproduction: When the male touches the female, he begins to tap her body with his first four legs. She raises her own front legs in a pose suggestive of self-defense. As the male drums on her body, she rises higher, finally opening her fangs as to bite. The male then grabs her *chelicerae* (where the fangs are located) with the special *tibial* hooks on his front legs, holding them open so she cannot bite. While she is reared up in this fashion, the male slips the tips of his palps (found on the ends of the pedi-palps, and used for the transfer of sperm to females) into the special slits on the underside of her abdomen, which lead to sperm storage chambers. After mating, the male makes a hasty retreat to avoid being killed and eaten by the female. The female makes a silk egg capsule to protect the 100 to 500 eggs, and may change its position to provide proper conditions for egg development. She abandons the young when they hatch about 6 weeks later.

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Longevity: The tarantula is the Methuselah of the spider world; the female may live 20+ years, but the male only about 6 years.

Diet: In the wild, virtually anything it can catch, including other spiders, small snakes, lizards, toads, and baby mice. In captivity, crickets and other large insects and the occasional pinky mouse for full grown spiders. The digestive system can only deal with liquid food. A tarantula may kill or immobilize its prey with venom or by crushing with its strong jaws. The spider then vomits a mixture of digestive enzymes onto its food, breaking the tissue down into a liquid that can be sucked up through the spider's mouthparts.

Miscellaneous: A tarantula's blood pressure is responsible for extending its legs; hydraulic pressure is used to produce limb movement, rather than the muscular strength associated with higher animals. It is therefore crucial that this blood pressure be maintained; a lack of fluids in the spider's body can bring about a drastic drop in pressure, which results in an inability to walk.

Signs of Stress: Shedding hairs, constant movement, jumping. Hairs

Handling: In the palm of your hand, with or without a glove. Don't make sudden movements; *dropping her will result in death!*