

Hermit Crab Feeding Guide

Hermit crabs require a nutritionally complete diet. For optimal health feed from all food groups each day. If you have several hermit crabs they will all be at different stages of the molt cycle. You also have no way to force them to eat certain foods at certain times. Offer them a balanced diet daily and they will eat what their body needs.

Precautions:

- *Dark greens and other foods high in Oxalic Acid should be cooked prior to serving. Oxalic Acid and Phosphorus block calcium absorption.*
- *All shellfish should be boiled or steamed prior to serving to avoid the spread of diseases of the exoskeleton*
- *Pesticide free is a must.*

Proteins and lipids

All meats, meat fats, domestic, wild game, fowl, fish, seafood (silversides, goldfish, clams, oysters, crab, shrimp, tuna, salmon (skin and fat) bone marrow), nut meats, avocado (meat only), bamboo stalks (not lucky bamboo), egg yolks, pumpkin seeds.

Oils (preferably cold pressed): coconut, olive, palm, sunflower, pumpkin seed

Alfalfa hay, broccoli, egg whites, flax seed, bloodworm, plankton, shrimp, kale, lentils, millet, rice, snap peas, soy beans, spinach, wheat germ, quinoa, spirulina.

Benefit: growth, molting, fueling metabolic function, discourages cannibalism

Carotenoids, Zeaxanthin, Cellulose

Tannin rich leaves, bark, cambium (inner branch skins) of oak, maple, mangrove root, some perennial leaves (Burning Bush). Fresh fruits and vegetables that are orange/yellow/red/dark green: Squash, sweet potato, carrots, corn, mango, blueberries, many flower petals (dry), spinach, fall foliage, bean sprouts, seaweed (especially spirulina), moss, acorn meat, avocado meat (only), bell peppers (orange, yellow, red), brussel sprouts, cilantro, collards, corn, corn meal, dandelion greens, egg yolk, grape leaves, romaine, papaya, parsley, peas, raspberry (leaves too), snap beans, pumpkin, pineapple, persimmon, peaches, passion fruit, microalgae, mango, apricot, cantaloupe, chard, guava, shellfish, salmon, tomato. Astaxanthin is found in microalgae, yeast, salmon, trout, krill, shrimp, crayfish, crustaceans, and the feathers of some birds.

Benefit: immune system, nervous system, color enhancement

Carbohydrates

Grape, apple, honey, grains, wheat germ, rice, oatmeal, dried fruit (mostly raisins due to copper sulfate use in others), banana, pineapple, citrus pulp (inner membrane of skin considered cellulose), dried vegetables, seaweed.

Benefit: quick energy (fuel)

Omega Fats

Coconut, walnut, whole fish (like a dead goldfish), fish skin, animal fat, olive oil, some grass seeds, seeds, peanut butter. Fresh flower petals: roses, sunflower, crab apple blossom

Benefit: nervous system, exo, processing minerals (including carotenoids)

Calcium

Freeze dried brine shrimp, meal worms, blood worms, krill (fresh, frozen, freeze dried), sand dollars, starfish, sea urchin, powdered oyster shells, cuttle bone, figs, microalgae, nuts, okra, quinoa, broccoli heads, amaranth, beans, molasses, egg shells, milk, bone meal, seaweeds.

Benefit: healthy exo and other functions

Chitin

Shrimp, crab, lobster, crawfish (shellfish should be boiled first), insect exoskeletons (such as cicadas), mushrooms.

Benefit: healthy exo

Other beneficial foods

Greensand, worm castings,

What to feed sick hermit crabs?

Hermit crabs missing one or both claws should be fed soft (squishy or liquid) foods that can be picked up by the maxillipeds. Honey or molasses mixed with spirulina powder is a good food for highly stressed crabs. Generally speaking most foods are equally valuable and getting the hermit crab to eat is more important than what it eats to begin with. Offering favorite foods to stimulate the appetite and fuel the metabolic function is your starting point, from there begin to incorporate foods from all of the above groups so that the crab has access to what its body needs to recover. Hermit crabs that are inactive and/or appear 'dry could be lacking in Omega fats. Lack of Omega fats could play a role in molt deaths.

Notes

Some dry foods (egg shells, grains, seeds, dried flowers, seaweed) can be sprinkled into the crabitat to encourage foraging behavior. Replenish when depleted.

Greensand and worm castings should be available at all times.

Astaxanthin sources must be paired with fats to be properly absorbed.

Reference:

This information is based on previous data collected and provided to The Crab Street Journal by Kerie Campbell

Updates by Stacy Griffith, Amber Miner

Crustacean Nutrition Volume 6 - World Aquaculture Society

For more information on hermit crab feeding and nutrition visit: CrabStreetJournal.org