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**Tarantula Research**

Tarantulas are species of spiders that have the characteristics of being large, hairy, and scary. They belong to the family Theraphosidae. Tarantulas consists of 1040 different species with 156 different genres. In contrast to having eight eyes, tarantulas are almost blind. They do not possess the sense of hearing and smelling, and their eyesight is weak, so they rely on their sense of feeling to survive. They are composed of thousands of body hairs that can sense change in vibrations in their surrounding including the air. Tarantulas are often misunderstood due to media portraying them as terrifying and something that invokes danger. This is heavily misconstrued because even though tarantulas can inject venom, none of them pose a deadly threat to humans. Tarantulas are defensive species, not aggressive. This is an important concept to understand because they do not actively go out of their way to hunt or hurt humans. Most tarantula accidents happen when a tarantula has no other choice but to bite. Most of the case, they choose to retreat to safety. They run and hide or throw out a threat posture to warn potential predators from going near them. They only utilize their venomous fangs as a last resort when cornered. Their venom potency depends on their genus location. There are two different kinds of tarantulas, new worlds, and old worlds. There are plenty of differences between the two such as urticating hairs, and venom potency. New world species tend to reside in the western hemisphere often found in America, and the rainforests. New world species possess the attributes of having urticating hairs and low-potency venom. To compensate for having a weaker venom, they utilize their urticating hairs as their main form of self-defense. When in danger, they would kick these hundreds of barbed wire-like hairs to irritate the aggressor/s skin, eyes, or nose. These urticating hairs can cause human skin irritation and itchiness that could last for hours. New world species also tend to have a calmer and more relaxed attitude contrary to old worlds. On the other hand, old worlds tend to be much quicker and possess highly toxic venom as their main source of self-defense. Due to lacking the ability to possess urticating hairs, they tend to solely rely on their bites which is why their venom is much more potent compared to their counterpart. Their venom can cause muscle ache, nausea and swelling in the bitten area that could last up to a few days. However, there have been no recorded deaths caused by tarantula bites.

Another classification of tarantulas is arboreal and terrestrial. Arboreal tarantulas reside on branches and tree cervices preferring to live in a vertical environment. Terrestrial tarantulas burrow underground deserts or forest floors. Tarantulas are opportunistic creatures, meaning that they do not hunt for prey. They tend to spend most of their lives stationary around their safe habitat waiting for clueless wandering prey to come by and fall to their doom. Tarantulas evolve in a way that they do not require a constant need for food because they stay stationary to preserve their energy. They could last months and years without food. The only time a tarantula would wander is to find a better habitat or to reproduce. Most tarantula being spotted wandering around are males looking for mate. Unlike other animals, tarantulas do not have obvious sexual dimorphism. The way to differentiate a male from a female is often evident when they become fully developed adults. Females can live up to 20 – 30 years while males only have an approximate 5 years of lifespan. Females also tend to get larger and bulkier than the male counterpart. When a male tarantula matures, they will develop hook-like body parts on their front hind legs. This is to prevent the female from eating the male during reproduction. They would use these pairs of legs with hooks to hold the female’s fangs still while they proceed with the reproduction process. Since tarantulas are territorial species, the females tend to eat the males most of the time during reproduction. If the process is successful, the female can lay up to hundreds of eggs to sustain their species longevity.

I personally owned about 20 species of tarantulas, and I have come to love these interesting species more and more. Owning different species provides different experiences and behaviors. It is such a fascinating pet to keep due to their intriguing behaviors compared to other pets. It is almost like owning a pet alien in my own room. There are many advantages of owning a pet tarantula such as low maintenance, no noise, no bad odor, and awesome display species to show off to friends and family. They do not need to eat as frequently as a regular pet. I usually feed my tarantulas once or twice a month. All they need to thrive is an appropriate enclosure that suits their type (arboreal / terrestrial), a water dish, and a hide where they can always retreat to when threatened. Overall, tarantulas are an amazing species that are unfortunately overshadowed by the media’s portrayal of inducing fear and disgust. I am hopeful that more people will come to understand them more and realize that they exist not to harm humans in any way. In reality, they are much more scared of us than we are of them. I am hopeful that this information will help people understand and care for these beautiful species more.