

DermeStid Beetles

A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

Habitat Setup and Maintenance

Old aquariums are great options for dermestid habitats. Do not use habitats made of wood or plastic, as the beetles are able to chew through these materials. Dermestids can also damage a number of natural materials such as wool and fur, so it is important to keep a good cover on the habitat at all times, especially since adult dermestids tend to fly from the colony in search of food.

Wood shavings (not cedar) make a suitable substrate. The substrate should be at least ½" deep, as larvae burrow into it to pupate and adults lay eggs in it.

Dermestid beetles prefer a dark environment with 50–60% humidity and a temperature of about 27° C (80°F). Too much moisture may result in the emergence of mites, which can destroy the entire colony. At the first sign of mites, increase ventilation. If the infestation is not too great, you may be able to salvage the colony. Lightly mist any material in the colony about once every day. You can also provide the dermestids with water by adding a moist paper towel to the habitat each day.

Dermestid beetles can consume enough protein from dried dog or cat food to survive, but to cultivate a thriving colony for skeletal preparations, supplement the dried food with bits of meat. Cooked chicken that has not completely dried out is a good supplement. Dermestids do not feed well on rotting meat nor will they attack a fresh carcass, so it is important to dry out any material. Check the habitat daily to ensure that all conditions are satisfactory.

It takes about 90 days to cultivate a “hot” culture, with a large percentage of larvae that can clean a skeleton quickly.

FAQ's

Do these beetles undergo metamorphosis?

Yes, they undergo complete metamorphosis with egg, larva, pupa, and adult stages. At 29.5° C (85° F), the length of each stage is as follows:

Egg: 3 days

Larva: 30 days (goes through 8 instars)

Pupa: 7 days

Adult: 100 days

How do I prepare a specimen to give to the beetles?

First, remove the skin and organs from the specimen, then remove as much of the muscle as you can without damaging the bones. The larvae will attack the cartilage last, so you must remember to remove the larvae from the skeleton before they damage the cartilage. If you do not, the skeleton will come out disarticulated (individual bones) and it will be difficult to reassemble.

I have processed a skeleton with the beetles. Now how do I get all the beetles off the skeleton?

Use forceps or a brush to remove as many larvae and adults as possible. Then dip the skeleton in 50% or stronger alcohol to kill any larvae or beetles that remain.

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



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