

Feeder cricket care

Crickets are one of the most common insects fed to pet reptiles and amphibians (pet herps), and are generally available all year-round. However, crickets need proper care and feeding to ensure your pet herp stays healthy.

Enclosure

- Crickets are often sold in small plastic containers. Once purchased, they should be moved to a larger **cricket house**. Commercial cricket houses can be purchased, or one can be constructed using a large plastic tub with a mesh top to provide ventilation.
- Provide crickets with **hiding holes**. This is most easily done with toilet paper rolls, small plastic tubes or egg cartons.
- At least once weekly, remove any dead crickets, faecal material and uneaten food.
- Between cricket batches, completely wash and clean the cricket house, and replace cardboard hiding holes.

Diet

- Crickets on their own lack certain nutrients that can lead to nutritional deficiencies in your pet herp. Crickets are a poor source of calcium and vitamins (notably vitamin A). By appropriately supplementing your feeder crickets, your pet herp will obtain these vital nutrients.
- “**Gut loading**” refers to feeding your crickets a high nutrient formula, which will stay in their gut. When your pet herp eats the cricket, they will then absorb those nutrients.
- In nature, wild insects are eating a variety of plants, so they are naturally “gut loaded” with nutrients. Store-bought crickets don’t have this opportunity, so they rely on us to “gut load” them.
- The gut-load formula should be available to the crickets, including in their hiding holes, for at least 48 hours prior to being fed out. Ideally, this should be **the only food source available** to your crickets during this period.
- The gut-load formula should contain ~ **8% calcium** and multivitamins (including vitamin A). Store your gut-load formula according to manufacturer’s guidelines to ensure nutrients remain stable.
- Crickets can be offered small amounts of vegetables, including carrots and leafy green veggies, when not being gut-loaded.

Calcium dusting

- Immediately prior to feeding the cricket ration to your pet herp, the crickets should be dusted in fine **calcium carbonate** powder.
- It is important that your pet herp eats the crickets shortly after being offered them as the crickets will clean the calcium powder off themselves.

Water

- Crickets easily drown in water. To avoid this, water can be provided by soaking a cotton ball in water and placing the soaked cotton ball in a very shallow dish or a plastic lid.

Temperature

- Crickets should be kept at a temperature of ~ 25-30°C for growth and sufficient consumption of food.

Humidity

- Crickets should be kept at humidity below 50%, ideally between 20-40%.

Health

- Dead crickets, mould and poor ventilation in the cricket house can result in sick crickets and additional cricket deaths, which can in turn cause health problems for your pet herp.
- If your crickets are dying, this can indicate that they are sick or not being cared for properly.

*It is important to offer your insectivorous pet herp a variety of insects of different nutritional profiles to avoid nutritional deficiencies.