

Pleasing Stag Beetle (*Lucanus placidus*)

CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KIT INCLUDES

- 1 *Lucanus placidus* larvae (L2 or older)
- a 16oz container full of bedding (also it's food)

THINGS YOU WILL NEED (not included)

- a habitat for the matured beetle (eventually)
- a misting bottle for occasional spraying (don't overwater)

WHEN THEY ARRIVE

Check your new friend over: the larvae will be in a 16oz cup full of wood shavings and a material called flake soil, which is basically just compressed, shredded, flaky wood. The container should be full enough that the substrate is pressing against the lid.

There should be no cracks or breaks in the container.

There may be a small amount of condensation (which is fine)

The larvae will be in there somewhere. If you want to find it, the best way is to gently dump the substrate out onto your hand, over a surface such as a piece of paper (which makes returning the substrate later a lot easier). Gently sift the substrate as it comes out with your fingers: you'll see a big ol grub eventually.

Careful! The larvae, and more so the adults, can deliver a sharp little pinch for an animal their size. It's not medically significant and usually won't even break the skin. Perhaps if they get you somewhere soft (like the skin between your fingers) you might need a band-aid. Very exciting!

GENERAL CARE:

- **Light:** Your stag beetle larvae does not require additional light
- **Temperature:** Room temperature, between 18-22 degrees.
- **Water:** **Check your beetle at least once every 2 weeks for humidity.** It should be consistent, very mildly damp: neither wet nor bone dry. There should not be much humidity inside the container. To add water, mist lightly (a single or double spray) unless there is already humidity showing inside the container.
- **Food:** **Your larvae should not need much, if any, additional food.** The food is the bedding. It will gradually turn the wood in the cup into frass (poop), which is rich in organic nutrients, and resembles black flattened balls of dirt (you will see the larvae passing frass if you hold it for any length of time). We have provisioned it with enough food for standard feed rates. However, some larvae seem to need more, so keep an eye on the substrate: if you find it's all turned into frass, you may need to add more wood, which we can supply OR which can be carefully foraged:
 - Choose a location that you know to be clean. Be very careful: runoff, byspray from pesticides/herbicides, and heavy metal leachate can all affect foraged materials.
 - Your larvae have been raised on birch, but you may also try other true hardwoods such as oak or maple. Use inner heartwood. Consistency of wood should be soft enough to crumble (aka, quite soft).
 - Crumble it up and add it into the substrate, preferably by mixing it into the substrate in general and not just adding it to the top.
- **Pressure:** **there should always be consistent "head pressure" in the container, meaning that the lid is actively pressing on the substrate.** This mimics conditions inside a log. If you find that the substrate is decreasing in volume as the larvae eats and turns it into frass, you can increase pressure by adding additional substrate or by adding a piece of clean paper towel on top to take up space.
- **Not sure?** Contact us (bugs@butterflyab.com)

LIFE CYCLE AND TIMELINES:

In the wild, these beetles have a lifespan of over 4 years due to going dormant over the winter. In captivity there is no hibernation, so the life cycle is shorter: usually about 1-1.3 years. About 8-10 months of this is spent as a larvae. Your larvae have already spent 4-5 months with us.

Your larvae is an L3, which is the longest and last larval stage. You can expect it to take another 3-6 months to reach pupation. It will then live another 2-3 months.

PUPATING: THE TRICKY PART

Regular molting is relatively easy for a larvae if it's just transitioning between larval stages: it's much like peeling off a sock. However, when they are ready to pupate and change their



form entirely, it is more complicated:

- Larvae constructs a pupal chamber, which is an oval burrow with very firm, hard walls, like a shell. They usually do this towards the bottom of the cup.
- They use repetitive body movements to harden and expand the space, so you'll see them in one place for a week, wiggling rhythmically.
- They eventually molt, starting at the back of the head, revealing the pupa which looks a bit like Kakuna from Pokemon but very chubby. You can see legs, eyes, antennae, all kinds of body parts on this. It will be smaller than the larvae was.
- After 3-4 weeks it will become an adult beetle, which is quite black.

Try not to disturb the larvae, the pupae, and the adult during this time. A fresh adult in particular is very fragile: deformities can be

caused by interfering with a newly eclosed adult beetle before it has hardened. Best to leave alone! Your adult beetle can burrow almost as well as the larvae and will make it's way to the top when it is ready.

ADULT BEETLES!

The adults are pretty, black beetles that can pinch with it's impressive mandibles. They can fly but rarely do. Males are larger, with longer mandibles than females.

Habitat for adult beetles: Lots of people like to make naturalistic habitats for them: terrariums or aquariums can be

planted prettily. Your beetle will be shy: it's going to hide under logs or away from light, just like a wild beetle. Finding it in substrate can be exciting! Provide lots of leaf litter and decaying materials for it to feel safe.

Feeding adult beetles: : Adult beetles will feed on banana, watermelon, or beetle jelly (which can sometimes be found on the internet for sale, though sadly we don't have any).

Water: keep a shallow dish with some stones in it for water. Bottle cap lids work well; they don't need much. They can also be misted regularly, perhaps 1-2 times a week.

Can my beetles be released? Technically, yes, though we don't recommend it for these animals as it is usually a death sentence. Much better to call us – we'd prefer to take them back from you than know that such a special animal is struggling.

We guarantee alive arrival in shipping: however, once the larvae arrive, be ready to take care of them. These are living creatures and have needs of their own you'll have to meet. We can't control what happens past the point of shipping, but we can help you on your beetle adventure. Should you encounter any problems with your beetles, call us right away so that we can help.

Butterfly Wings N' Wishes respectfully acknowledges that we operate on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our business, our way of life, and our community.

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