

# SPOOD CARE SHEET

Congratulations on your new SPOOD!!! They are adorable, captivating little creatures with so much going on behind those big googly eyes. You've probably done a good deal of research and have read and heard a lot of the information below, but it's good to share just in case. Each of us will develop a unique way of creating their habitat, feeding, and providing enrichment and engagement to the spiders we care for. So, with that in mind, these are just insights from my own experience.

## ***Habitat***

I like to think of jumping spiders, which I call SPOODS, as small 8-legged panthers. They are not like other arachnids what build their web in places where flying insects gather, nor do they build a nest on the ground and lay in wait for prey to trigger their senses. THEY HUNT, like a panther! Their eyesight is designed to see the slightest movement, in any direction, and possess an ability to gauge distance precisely, and then pounce with precision! Excellent hunters always prefer places with a vantage point, in their world high up is best! They are arboreal, so they prefer to dwell above the ground in trees, shrubs, on fences, walls, etc. They are also diurnal, so they much like us are awake with the sun and asleep when it's dark.

With that in mind, they will likely set up a 'hammock' to sleep and chill in at the top of the habitat that you provide for them. So, a top opening enclosure is not optimal, as you would be destroying their hard work every time you open the enclosure to mist and feed. I prefer enclosures that have a side opening door, and a removable bottom that can easily be taken off for cleaning. My favorite enclosures have a removable a-frame top.

I set up my enclosure area near (not in front of) a window for some natural daylight (never direct sunlight), and my home temperatures always hover around 70° F, and that is fine for them. My region of the country sees MANY overcast/rainy days, so I do have a lamp that casts bright light and some warmth in their direction, set on a timer.

If your spood is instar 5-7, a medium enclosure is best, perhaps a 3"x3"x3".

For a sub-adult or mature spood, a 4"x4"x8" provides good roaming space, with the height to create a comfortable home overlooking their kingdom. Be sure the enclosure has good cross ventilation, but not holes or openings large enough for your spood to escape.

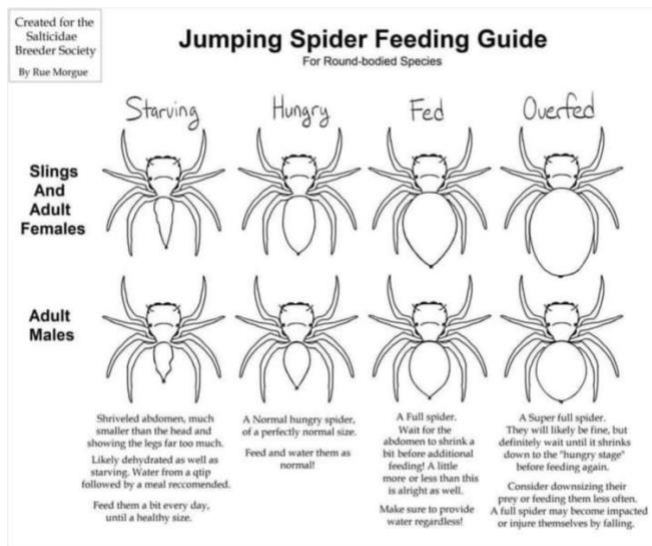
It is good to provide some added décor for climbing and for hunting from. I prefer to use fake greenery and natural twigs and some rocks, and a coco fiber flooring base. It is recommended that any natural items be baked at 200° for 30 minutes to kill off any harmful microorganisms. Also, any artificial décor should be sealed and allowed to air out and release any residual fumes. In nature, the spider might encounter those harmful organisms, and they can relocate to avoid them. In your enclosure, they do not have the option to relocate.

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## Feeding

Jumping spider diets change over time based on their size and needs. When younger, food is smaller portions fed in greater frequency. As they grow, larger food can be offered less frequently, like every other day, until they mature, at which point they may only be needing to eat once every week or two. (May differ with females vs. males)

A general guide is below and should be used in addition to best judgement considering the spiders abdomen size. (see feeding chart)



Instar 5-6 – feed 3-4 hydei fruit flies or 6+ melanogaster fruit flies every two days. Intersperse with other type of food such as extra-small meal worms or young (pinhead) crickets, same size as the spider.

Instar 7-8- feed 1 cricket, or 1 blue bottle fly or larvae, one isopod, or one small dubia roach, every 3-4 days.

Instar 9-10 - feed 1 cricket, or 1 blue bottle fly or larvae, or one small horned worm once every 5-7 days.

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***Handling and Engagement*** So many have been given the gift of overcoming arachnophobia by learning to handle their jumping spider pet. Spiders will each have their own 'spider personality' and behaviors; some are explorers, others are loafers; some enjoy being handled, others merely tolerate it, and some will NOT have it.

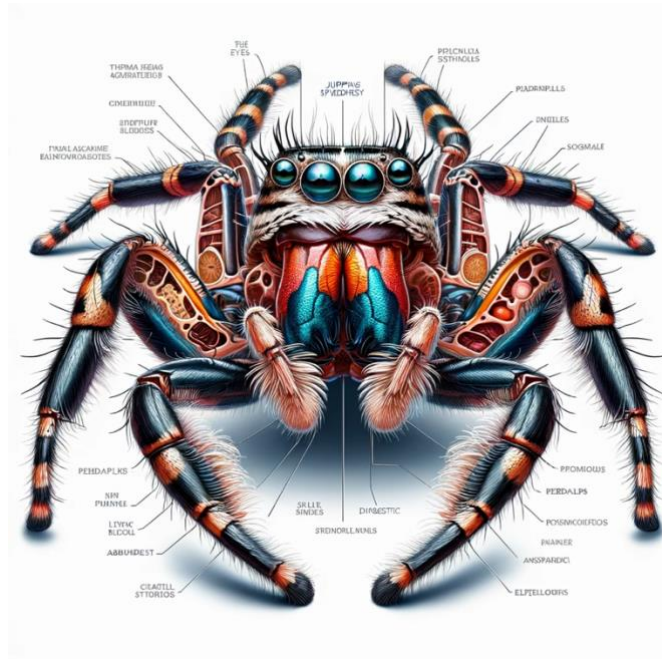
Unless you are accustomed to handling spiders, it's best to start off slowly. When first engaging with them, do it on the floor away from the hustle and bustle of your main living space. Consider putting down a white sheet so you can better see your spider if it decides to jump or startles. Have an empty clear container, called a 'catch cup', nearby to help you feel assured at managing a startled spider. Equip yourself with a soft bristle paint brush to help gently guide your spider where you hope it will go. Be prepared for the possibility that your spider might decide to walk onto your hand or skin, and then quickly change their mind and try to jump back to where they came from. Offer your hand again allowing them the opportunity to slowly become familiar with the feel & warmth of skin, and even the kinetic energy of your heartbeat that's present just under your skin. Take it slow.

I've always appreciated and used the advice that it helps to gently speak to your spood. Their bodies are covered in tiny hairs that sense the slightest movement in the environment, including vibrations from your voice. The best words are those that reinforce how cool you think that your spood is; those words act as positive reinforcement for both of you.

***Enrichment*** Search the web, and you'll see a variety of activity structures that are used to offer spiders opportunities to climb, jump, explore, and rest with a cool view. I've added an example of one of mine. Once a week I will place one of my spider's habitats in front of the activity structure, leave the door open to allow them to choose some exploration. This is only advised if you can be present while they are out of their habitat. Use your paint brush to gently coax them back into their habitat when you've determined that play time is over.

***Community*** Lastly, it will benefit you and your spood greatly to seek out community, for shared joy, advice, support in caring for them. Facebook and Instagram have great groups filled with kind folks who are happy to share resource information, experience, and encouragement. Stay in touch and feel free to reach out with questions.

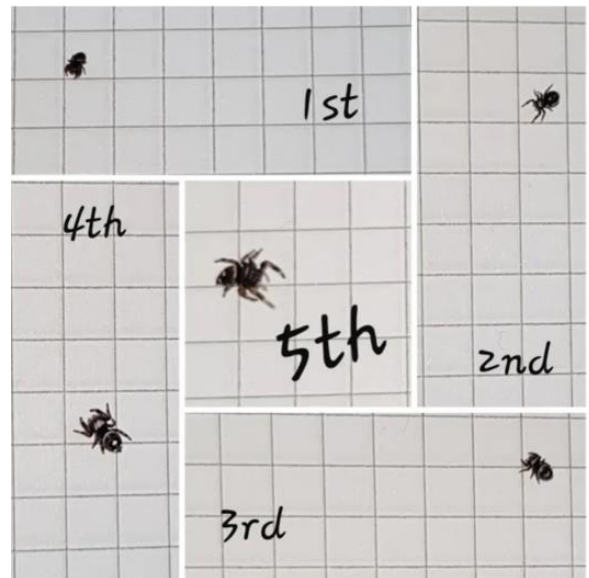
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## Resource

<https://spiderswebhq.com/anatomy-of-jumping-spiders/>

## ***Instar Guide***



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## ***Mis-molts***

Spiders grow to maturity through hunting, eating/drinking, and then molting and shedding their exoskeleton which they have outgrown. Each time they shed their exoskeleton; they require some time for the newly exposed body to toughen up. Each molt phase is marked as an "INSTAR". (See Instar Chart)

Spiders will instinctively retreat to their hammock in preparation for molting. During this time, which can last for up to 2 weeks, they will not seek out food, but will require misting near their hammock to drink, and a steady humidity level to help with the extraction from their old exoskeleton.

Occasionally a spider will have a difficult molt and there are a few ways that you can help them succeed to a healthy new instar. A helpful practice for my process is to add a small piece of tightly folded paper towel that has been saturated in clean water, which will impart humidity to the habitat for the molt process. If the spider does not clear itself from the old molt, you can offer it some water on a cotton swab by soaking the cotton in water and slowly putting the tip near their pedipalp to accept some water. The most frequent help I've offered is to use the tip of a wet paint brush to help remove the molted skin still attached to their bum.

## ***Concerns***

Every one of us who has cared for spiders have had the experience of watching them fail to thrive, and sometimes recover, but sadly not always.

In times when the spider hasn't been hunting and eating normally, or as it has in recent weeks, it could indicate that a molt is coming. If their abdomen is looking thin, it is likely something else and some interventions can be made. Offering some honey water can give the spider the energy it needs to get through what is happening and help them get back to normal. Sometimes it can help to incapacitate their prey, or even squeeze some of the innards out, and offer them to the spider as you would water, on a cotton swab. Just like us, food, water, rest, repeat – until we get feeling better.

If the spood continues to struggle, the widely spread advice is to move them into a smaller 'ICU' enclosure for some 'intensive care'. Using a smaller enclosure, adding a soft padded base of cotton or folded paper towel, moistened but not saturated, and some warmth. Many have suggested placement in a bathroom where the warmth and humidity can be brought up by turning on a hot shower or sink water and closing the bathroom door. This is an incremental treatment, not to be continued for hours, but for minutes.