



**P & K Pets
Info Sheet #20**

19 Magill Rd

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RHINO BEETLE

CARE



INFORMATION



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INTRODUCTION

The rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros*) is aptly named because it has horns on its head, much like the rhinoceros does. These beetles are found in most tropical rainforests around the equator region. Rhino beetles are real strong! Scientists believe that the beetle has become so strong to be able to forage through heavy litter on the jungle floor and dig its way to safety. Using its horns it can dig its way out of a sticky situation by burying itself underground, escaping danger. The rhinoceros beetle can carry 850 times its own weight. That's equivalent to a man lifting a stack of 76 family sized cars. In spite of their fierce appearance, they are all totally harmless. They cannot bite or sting or hurt you with their horns.

HOUSING

Any vivarium or enclosure should be suitable for a rhino beetle providing it is larger than 2 foot long. They are quite hardy animals and can be handled easily. Keep in mind that they are expert flyers and should not be taken outdoors. Soil is a good substrate and 100mm - 200mm should be put in the bottom, this should be mixed with chunks of wood in varying sizes and mashed leaf litter. Some other driftwood or logs should be provided for climbing. Water and food should always be available but other than that their requirements are minimal.

Females may be housed together, but males cannot. Only one male can be placed in any one enclosure as they are highly territorial and will fight. They are best suited to a tropical environment, so temperatures around 22°C to 30°C are ideal, however, they are highly tolerable. If temperatures are too low you should consider a heat lamp. Humidity should also be high, so the occasional misting of the tank will help.



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FEEDING

Adult rhino beetles eat rotting fruit and sap, and in spite of their size, they don't eat very much. In captivity they will eat most fruit that is provided for them, and they will cherish some old banana. The larvae, on the other hand, eat a great deal of rotting wood or the compost in which they live. It is not known if they actually consume water directly, but this should always be provided regardless. It's assumed that the adult gets all the moisture it needs from its food.



LIFE CYCLE

Rhino beetles have three instars, that is, they go through three moults before changing into the pupal stage. It is difficult to say what the average life span is because the name rhino beetle actually refers to about 300 different species of scarab beetles. Some live in tropical countries and some live in North America, and so the length of their lives varies a lot. As a rough guide, when in adult stage, the rhino beetle can live for two to three years. However there are varying estimates for the larvae stage depending on species. Some remaining in their larvae form for up to three years.





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GENERAL

Rhino beetles are considered extremely helpful because they are important in recycling plant material back into the ecosystem. On only a few rare occasions has a species reached pest proportions, and this has usually happened in sugar cane fields or palm plantations that have been recently carved out of the jungle. In this case, humans have entered the home habitat of the beetles and upset the balance of things.



The best protection they have from predators is their usually large size combined with their activity being at night. During the day, they are hiding under logs or in vegetation and invisible from the few predators big enough to want to eat them. Surprisingly, the horn of the male is not used for protection but rather for the occasional battle with another male over a feeding site or territory. The victorious male with the feeding site can then often attract a mate.

Rhino beetles are interesting to look at and easy to care for. So they make ideal pets, especially for beginners.