

BEETTLES INFO SHEET

Beetles live everywhere, from the tropics to the high latitudes. There are over 400,000 beetle species across the world, making this the largest of all orders, constituting nearly 40% of all described insects, and around 25% of all animal taxa.

Beetles occur in every conceivable shape, size and form. Many beetles are living jewels, with brightly coloured or iridescent exoskeletons that rival butterflies for their beauty.

Ranging from tiny species (less than 1 mm in length), to the 167 mm long Hercules beetles (the longest beetle in the world), the diversity of beetles is staggering.

In many beetle species, the males sport spectacular horns or pincers which they use to battle other males in dramatic miniature dramas.

Many people do not fully appreciate the amazing metamorphosis that beetles undergo. After hatching from eggs, all beetles spend months, even years, as grubs, usually buried underground or hidden inside the bark of logs or trees. Much like caterpillars, beetle grubs eventually pupate, only to emerge as a completely different form to begin a new life above ground as adults.

Image 1: Tropical stag beetles make fascinating and entertaining pets;

Image 2: A spotted flower beetle, *Stephanorrhina guttata*;

image 3: Several individuals of the spotted flower beetle, *Stephanorrhina guttata* and Derby's flower beetle, *Dicronorrhina derbyana*, feeding on a slice of banana.



How to keep beetles

The following is a brief summary and does not include all of the information required to look after these exquisite creatures. If you are interested in keeping beetles, please refer to the fourteen page Beetles chapter in the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Beetles make colourful, interesting and unusual pets. To set up your beetle colony, you will need a suitable enclosure, such as a small fish tank made of glass or plastic, a large plastic jar or a terrarium. Part fill the enclosure with a layer of 10 - 15 cm of a rich woodland, leaf litter mould consisting of rotting leaves, bark and soft, decaying wood which the beetle grubs will consume.

Then put into the enclosure pieces of bark for the adult beetles to climb on, and slices of soft fresh fruit (such as bananas) or commercially produced punnets of beetle jelly for your adult beetles to eat.

When your set up is ready, purchase around ten adult beetles of the species you wish to rear. This quantity should give a mix of males and females, and within a few months, you should find larvae buried within the leaf mould.

There are dozens of commercially bred pet beetle species to choose from. Sun beetles (*Pachnoda* spp.) and spotted flower beetle (*Stephanorrhina guttata*) are easy to keep and colourful species that are recommended for first time beetle keepers.

Each species of beetle has its own specific temperature requirements, and so it may be necessary for you to provide warmth to your enclosure via a heat pad. Also, for most species, spray the inside of your enclosure lightly a few times a week to ensure that the substrate does not dry out, and consider installing lights at the top of your enclosure to really show off your beetles' amazing colouration.

A successful beetle colony will provide hours of entertainment, as you observe the adult beetles foraging for food, and the grubs occasionally tugging leaves underground to consume.

For more information, see the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book.

Image 4: A larva of a sun beetle, *Pachnoda marginata*;

Image 5: An adult sun beetle, *Pachnoda aemula*;

image 6: Male rhinoceros beetles possess spectacular horns for grappling.



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**Buy the *Weird and Wonderful Pets* book
to discover the biology, ecology, diversity
and how to keep beetles**

**To order your copy visit:
www.weirdandwonderfulpets.com**

