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## CARE GUIDE



# Giant African Land Snail

Congratulations on purchasing the Komodo Basic kit for the Giant African Land Snail. Giant Land Snails are easy to keep and make unusual pets that can provide much interest and pleasure, particularly for children. The scientific name for the most commonly kept commonly kept species is *Achatina fulica*.

## Quick Facts

- Adult size is about 20 cm long and the largest ever recorded was 37.5 cm long.
- In general, Giant African Land Snails have an expected lifespan of about 5-10 years.
- These snails are hermaphrodites, which means that each snail has both male and female reproductive organs. However, an individual snail needs a partner to be able to reproduce by cross fertilization.
- They can be handled, and are quite docile and slow moving.
- They will hibernate if the environment is either too hot or cold.
- They get along fine with others so you can keep several together in this habitat. however, eventually they will breed and you will need to deal with housing the babies or destroying eggs before they hatch.
- It is illegal and improper to release Giant African Land Snails into the wild.

## Feeding

Snails are peaceful vegetarians. Their favorite foods are leafy greens like lettuce, cabbage and cucumber. Food should be placed on the floor of the habitat. A piece of cuttlefish bone such as the Komodo Cuttle Bone or Cuttle Discs are an ideal source of essential calcium, these will need to be replaced as it is consumed.

## Decor

The substrate should be kept at least 5cm thick to accommodate the animals natural behavior of burrowing and hiding in the humid (but not soaking wet) ground cover. The addition of some Habitat Bark will also provide cage enrichment and an opportunity for climbing different textures.

## Handling

Giant Land Snails are perfectly safe to handle gently. Simply pick the animal up by taking a firm grasp of the shell. If the snail's soft body tissue is out and attached to the sides of the habitat, do not hold the shell and pull the animal off. Preferably, take it by the shell and slowly slide it off the edge of the side or top. Wet your hand before placing the shell in your palm. When you have earned their trust by being very still, they will usually come out of their shell and start to crawl about. As with other animals, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after handling.

## Health

Giant Land Snails appear to suffer from few ailments in captivity provided that their husbandry needs are properly met. It is important to maintain a clean environment and the habitat substrate usually needs to be inspected and renewed weekly. Snail trails can be cleaned from the sides and top with a clean cloth and warm water. Sometimes tiny mites can be seen moving about on the animals. These are totally harmless, and live in a symbiotic relationship with the snail. If the population becomes too large it is possible to remove them. The best method to remove mites from a snail is to use a cotton bud dipped in warm water. Any chemical treatment used for mites will probably affect snails as well.

## Heating

Giant African Land Snails come from the tropics of East Africa, so they might need some supplementary heating within a normal house. This is best provided by using the enclosed Komodo Advanced heat mat. This should be placed upright on the back wall outside the tank. If placed underneath, the heat mat tends to dry the substrate out too quickly, hence the location recommended. By providing this gradient your snails will find a position which makes them feel most comfortable. Komodo Advanced Heat Mats must be used in conjunction with a thermostat such as the Komodo 100w On/Off Thermostat. Thermostats control the temperature of your heat mat and ensure optimal temperatures within the environment. Further instructions are included with the heat mat. African land Snails will go into either hibernation or aestivation, (a state of inactivity and reduced metabolic rate induced by heat) if they are too cold or hot. This is not harmful and they can simply be woken up when conditions are right again.

## Humidity

The humidity level should also be kept quite high, and this can be achieved by keeping the substrate damp (not wet) with regular misting, using a Komodo 550ml Spray Bottle.

## Lighting

Ambient light is sufficient for these nocturnal creatures who generally avoid bright light and excessive heat.

## Water

Although Giant land Snails will gain much of the moisture that they need from their food, they will still drink from a water bowl. This should be shallow so that there is no danger of drowning and should be kept fresh at all times.

## Breeding

If two or more snails are kept together they will eventually breed. Adults lay up to 200 eggs, five or six times per year. The eggs are laid in the moist substrate and will hatch at around fourteen days later. Part of being a responsible pet owner is to make sure you can home or re-home any animals that you have bred. It often means that the most humane way of stopping from being over run with young snails is to prevent the eggs from hatching. This is best accomplished by placing the eggs in a plastic bag and then into a freezer for forty eight hours. It cannot be emphasized enough that releasing Giant Snails into the wild is illegal, damaging to the environment and potentially cruel to the animals themselves.



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### Top Tip

Use a soft toothbrush dipped in warm water to gently clean their shell.

### Quick Setup Guide:

1. Check that all the parts are present and remove the packaging from the Habitat.
2. Position the heat mat in the appropriate place on the outside of the habitat in accordance with the instructions given above and with the dedicated heat mat instructions.
3. Prepare the substrate according to the instructions on the brick
4. Empty the substrate into the habitat. Mist the substrate if required
5. Position the heat/humidity gauge in a suitable place, preferably near the heat mat so that you can monitor and prevent the habitat from overheating.
6. Place the filled water bowl into the habitat using bottled water if possible.
7. Carefully place your new snail into the habitat and ensure the top is on securely.

### Extra shopping list

- Komodo 550ml Spray bottle**
- Komodo Cuttle Bone or Discs**
- Komodo Habitat Bark**
- Komodo 100w On/Off Thermostat**

*For further information we recommend a good book such as Your First Giant African land Snail or contacting the Amateur Entomological Society @[www.amentsoc.org](http://www.amentsoc.org)*



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