Live Animal Care Guide

Welcome to Your Live Animal Materials

In this guide you will find the materials and information needed to prepare and care for your crayfish.

SK4.4 Structures & Functions of Life

Anchoring Phenomena:
Structures & Functions of Life

Driving Question:
How do plants and animals survive, grow and reproduce?

Science Center Support Materials

Bag Z
- 1 small dechlorinator

Loose Items
- 6 – 32oz jars of sand
- 2 – 32oz jars of gravel
- 4 log hides
- 1 – 28-quart container with lid w/holes

Vendor Provided
- 3 Crayfish
- 1 vial crayfish food

Procambarus clarkii – Crayfish Care Guide

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Your live materials will be priority shipped and require immediate opening upon arrival. It is important that you prepare habitats for their arrival accordingly, as leaving them in their shipping packaging for too long could lead to increased stress for the animals.

Every effort is made to ensure the safe arrival of your crayfish. However, if upon receiving your shipment your crayfish are clearly ill or dead; please notify us so that we can send a replacement (sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org). Unfortunately, our new vendor will require proof of the deceased animal, so please provide a picture with your email.

Preparing for Arrival

After you have ordered your live material, you will receive a box labeled Grade 4 Crayfish Support Materials, from the Science Center. The box will contain everything needed to support your live animal in terms of housing. The animal **food** will be supplied by the vendor and will arrive **separately** from the Science Center materials.

1. Rinse out the crayfish containers, fill the bottom of the habitat with sand, and give the crayfish a few options for hiding places. (It is best to provide more hiding places than there are crayfish; proved in the habitat materials are 4 log hides.)
    a. Crayfish are able to **climb** very well so make sure the hides are not too close to the walls of the container.

2. Use the dechlorinator according to the directions on the bottle to prepare water. Prepare the water 24 hours prior to the crayfish arrival to ensure the **dechlorinated** water is at **room temperature**. The water level should be high enough to completely cover the animals, but no higher than 5 or 6 inches to ensure they will have enough oxygen.

All water used for crayfish habitats should be dechlorinated and around room temperature. The simplest way to achieve this is to prepare water with the dechlorinator or by letting the water sit for up to a day before using it in crayfish habitats.

Arrival Day

Crayfish will arrive in a bucket with water-soaked sponges, and should be transferred to their new homes as soon as possible. You may leave the sponges in the habitat for additional hiding and climbing spaces if you wish.

Feeding

Crayfish are omnivores; along with the provided pellets, they are able to eat many small things such as fish food or small pieces of fish, crab, worms, or aquatic plants. When feeding crayfish who live together, it is best to place food close to each one's preferred home or hiding spot. Once you have used the food provided, please visit your local pet store to replenish your supply.

Maintaining your Crayfish Tank

At least once or twice a week, replace about one quarter of the water in the habitat with **room temperature, dechlorinated water**. Crayfish habitats should be kept out of direct sunlight. They prefer temperatures at or slightly below room temperature, so if your classroom is warm, consider placing a fan nearby to help keep the water cool.

Crayfish can be hostile toward each other, especially in crowded conditions. If you notice signs of aggression or injured animals, it may be best to move some into separate habitats for their safety. Keep in mind that you may not see actual conflicts during the day as crayfish are largely nocturnal.

Molting

Crayfish, like other crustaceans, molt as they grow, shedding their exoskeleton to grow a new and larger one and even regrowing limbs if needed. This process takes a few days and leaves the animal **highly vulnerable** to attacks from others. If you see signs of a crayfish in the molting process, you may consider sectioning it off from others, giving it more hiding places, or temporarily relocating it to help it survive the dangerous process.

Handling

Crayfish are not social animals and handling can often be a stressful experience for them. Additionally, they have the ability to pinch when handled, which doesn't necessarily cause lasting damage but can hurt and even draw blood. The most effective way to do this is to gently grab its body behind its claws, with your thumb and index finger, being careful not to hold it too firmly. Always wash your hands with soap and water after handling crayfish and related materials.

Removal from Classroom

Teachers are free to keep the crayfish if they wish. Medium to large crayfish should be given at least a square foot of space per two organisms, with plentiful hiding spots if multiple are being kept. Crayfish can live for up to multiple years. Teacher is responsible for providing a home, food and anything else needed to house/care for the animal long term.

At some point you may want to say goodbye to your classroom pet. There are a number of ways to safely remove them from your classroom:

1. Sending your classroom pet home with a student is possible only with parent agreement and an understanding of how to appropriately care for the animal. Please confirm with parent. Student is responsible for providing a home, food and anything else needed to house/care for the animal.
2. Contact your middle and high school science teachers to see if they have any interest in housing the fish and snails.
3. Contact a local pet store to see if they will accept your fish and snails.
4. If you are part of OHM BOCES and our couriers go to your school, please email the Science Center at sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org to arrange a live animal pick-up.