

Crayfish

Species: *clarkii*
Genus: *Procambarus*
Family: Pleocyemata
Order: Decapoda
Class: Malacostraca
Subphylum: Crustacea
Phylum: Arthropoda
Kingdom: Animalia



Conditions for Customer Ownership

We hold permits allowing us to transport these organisms. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.

There are currently no USDA permits required for this organism. In order to protect our environment, never release a live laboratory organism into the wild. Restricted in Arizona. If you live in Arizona, please contact your state agriculture department to obtain a permit. We cannot ship this organism to a customer in Arizona unless they have an individual state permit.

Primary Hazard Considerations

When handling the crayfish approach slowly from the rear. To avoid the chelae, which are capable of delivering a painful pinch, grasp the crayfish on either side of the carapace, just behind the first pair of legs. Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling your crayfish, its food, or anything it has touched.

Availability

- Crayfish are generally available year-round. They are wild collected.
- We over-pack each order of crayfish. It is normal to have some deceased crayfish in the container. You will receive at least the quantity of live crayfish stated on the container.
- Although they can remain out of water for brief periods, crayfish breathe using gills, which must be kept moist. To prevent them from drying out crayfish are shipped with damp foam. We recommend that you open your shipment as soon as it arrives and transfer the crayfish to a suitable container. Crayfish size ranges from 7.5 to 10 centimeters.

Captive Care

Habitat:

- Crayfish may be kept in an aquarium or similar water-tight-container. A 30-gallon aquarium will house up to six large crayfish. Plastic wading pools are ideal for housing large quantities of crayfish. The water should be deep enough to just cover the crayfish—approximately 4 to 5 centimeters. Crayfish do not survive deep-water conditions unless oxygen is supplied by an aerator. Room temperature water is suitable for classroom use (between 18°C and 24°C), although cooler water is better.
- Use [Aquarium Gravel 21 W 1800](#) to cover the bottom of the container. You must also add a handful of sand to allow the crayfish to replace the sand in their statocysts after molting. An earthen plant pot or a cave made of rocks will allow the crayfish to hide during the day. Crayfish are territorial, thus a hiding place should be provided for each specimen.
- Change the water in the aquarium every day in order to replenish the supply of oxygen. If an airstone is being used, the water can be changed less frequently. The container can be cleaned occasionally with a plastic scouring pad—do not use soap.

Care:

- Crayfish will eat pieces of earthworm, fish, beef, or liver and should be fed twice per week (5 centimeter portion per crayfish). If the habitat is difficult to clean, remove the crayfish to a temporary container for feeding, such as a pail with 3 to 5 centimeters of water. Remove any uneaten food from the crayfish habitat to avoid fouling the water.

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Information

- Method of reproduction: Sexual. Mating usually occurs in the fall with internal fertilization of up to 500 eggs. Using a sticky substance, the female attaches the eggs to her pleopods where they are protected until they hatch in the spring.
- Determining Sex: To determine the sex of your crayfish examine the appendages, called pleopods (swimmerets), on the underside of the abdomen. In male crayfish the first two pairs of pleopods are enlarged relative to the rest. The pleopods of female crayfish all look alike.

Life Cycle

- Eggs will hatch in 22 weeks, depending on water temperature. Newly hatched crayfish are very similar in appearance to adults. The young remain attached to the female's pleopods for one to two weeks before leaving to fend for themselves. They become sexually mature in about three months. They live for 2–3 years. Crayfish molt when they grow—juveniles can molt every week, adults molt once a year.

Wild Habitat

- Crayfish are common inhabitants of ponds, streams, marshes and other bodies of freshwater throughout North America. *Procambarus clarkii* are native to south central US and northern Mexico. They are nocturnal creatures, hiding by day under rocks or in burrows which they dig using their large chelae or pincers. Crayfish are omnivores. Their diet consists of insects, small fish, snails and plants as well as dead plant and animal matter.

Disposition

- Do not release this organism into the environment.
- Adoption is the preferred disposition of a crayfish.
- If your crayfish requires euthanasia, use the following method:
 - Place crayfish in a sealed plastic bag, and place the bag in a freezer for 48 hours.
- A deceased specimen should be disposed of as soon as possible. Consult your school's recommended procedures for disposal.
- In general, a dead crayfish should be handled with gloves, wrapped in an absorbent material (e.g. newspaper), wrapped again in an opaque plastic bag, then placed inside a opaque plastic bag that is sealed (tied tightly) before being placed in a general garbage container away from students.