



## Mexican Red-knee Tarantula *Brachypelma smithi*

**Description:** The Mexican Red-knee Tarantula has eight legs with brightly colored red-orange stripes. Their leg span is an average 6-7 inches. Its abdomen and thorax are usually black or dark brown. They have two hollow fangs that they use to inject venom into their prey, although considered harmless to humans. Their body is covered in very fine hairs that they can flick off onto a predator to irritate them.

**Range:** They are found on the west coast of Mexico and the south eastern part of the United States. They sometimes will be found in the rainforests of Mexico.

**Habitat:** Tarantulas are found in both deserts and rainforests. They prefer to be hidden under rocks, logs and in burrows.

**Life Span:** Females can live 25-30 years but males rarely live over 10 years.

**Behavior:** Tarantulas tend to hunt at night while hiding in burrows during the day. They are solitary in the wild and only come together to mate. When they grow they will molt, meaning they will shed their exoskeleton and reveal a new one underneath.

**Natural Diet:** In the wild, tarantulas eat small mice, lizards, and insects like crickets. They will subdue their prey by injecting venom into them with their two fangs. The venom will paralyze their prey and also release digestive juices that start to digest the inside of the prey.

**Zoo Diet:** At the Zoo tarantulas are fed crickets and, occasionally, small mice.

**Reproduction:** Females can have up to 700 young a year! She will carry the eggs until they hatch.

**Conservation status:** Near threatened