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DermeStid beetle enclosure for elk

Discussion in 'Off Topic Central' started by jeph422, November 3, 2007. Keeping trophies from your game hunting is something most hunters enjoy doing. Some hunters get the full taxidermy treatment and have hides and heads preserved with an authentic-looking mount. Other hunters enjoy creating skull mounts that showcase the skull and antlers of their game. Skull mounts are quite popular because they are the perfect DIY taxidermy project. Whether you prefer getting the full taxidermy treatment or skull mounts, the best way to preserve skulls and bone structures of game is by using a dermestid beetle colony. Establishing a colony is not that difficult and can be a fun experience if you have ever wanted to try taxidermy. To get started, you will need to find a supplier that offers dermestid beetles for sale. It is important to choose a supplier that can verify its colonies are 100% healthy and do not have any other pests, mites, or fly larvae in the colony. These insects can wipe out the beetle colony. Your beetles will need a place to live. You can use a glass or acrylic aquarium tank or other secure types of containers that will keep the beetles contained. You will also need shredded paper or wood shavings to put on the bottom of the tank. You will also want Styrofoam or foam cubes to place over the base layer. On top of the Styrofoam, you will want to place several sponges. You need to get a reptile heater or another type of heating device that does not emit light. Additionally, you will want a temperature gauge attached inside the tank. The temperature strips are sufficient. Last, you will want a screen for the top of the tank to keep your beetles contained. Prepare your beetle housing in anticipation of the dermestid beetles you ordered. This species of beetles thrives in temperatures between 650F and 850F. However, you want to keep the temperature below 800F to prevent the beetles from flying. When you receive your beetles, they will arrive packed in frass, which consists of broken-down materials like those you have in your tank. You will want to carefully pour the entire contents of the packaging into your housing. The frass will contain beetle eggs, so you don't want to throw it away. You will need to feed your beetles. They thrive well on fish scraps and meat scraps when they are not eating away the flesh of skulls and bones. The scraps can be slightly dry. Your beetles also need water. Spray room-temperature water onto the sponges in the tank. You can also wet a paper towel and place it in the tank. To get started cleaning skulls and bones of the game animals you want preserved, you need an established colony of around 300 beetles. Keep in mind, this is a small number, so cleaning a deer, ram, or elk skull can take a few weeks. Yet, providing this food source will allow your colony to continue to grow. When you reach around 1,000 or more beetles, they will be able to tackle cleaning jobs more efficiently and faster. As a beginner, we understand you will have questions about ordering and caring for your dermestid beetle colony. Do not hesitate to contact us at 907-942-2487 today! We are happy to answer all of your questions pre-order and provide ongoing support post-order. Whether you're a taxidermist who needs clean skulls, a hunter looking for a fresh trophy, or an artist or museum curator, dermestid beetles are efficient and thorough. These beetles used for taxidermy clean skulls and prevent damage from boiling or chemicals. You'll need anywhere from a few hundred to thousands of beetles. To maintain a large colony, you need the conditions for beetles to thrive throughout their life cycle. The enclosure must have the right conditions for eggs, which hatch in three to four days; larvae, which grow and molt over 44 days; and pupae, which take up to eight days to become adults. Adult beetles live up to five months. The bugs consume flesh in their larval stage. While you can buy beetles online, the living environment must support both growing larvae and adults that lay eggs. An example of this type of environment is as follows: Flesh-eating beetles don't need a lot of room. A confined space is fine so long as plenty of food is available. A plastic tote, insulated chest freezer, or aquarium will do (just remove the corner silicone if using an aquarium, as beetles can climb up this). The container should be big enough to hold the item being cleaned. You can line the container floor with mammal bedding from pet stores, cotton wadding, or even shredded paper. An inch of material is good enough for the beetles to live in. Some Styrofoam should be added as well. It provides a place for larvae to burrow into and pupate. Over time, the container bottom will become coated in powdery "frass," which is a combination of chewed-up Styrofoam and beetle waste. Scoop out frass that's more than a few inches deep, damp, or caked up. Warm temperatures are needed to keep the beetles active. The ideal temperature range is 65 to 85°F. The beetles can't fly unless the temperature is over 80°F, so it's best to keep things cooler than that. Although heating lamps are effective, a ceramic heating fixture or a reptile heating pad is best, as dermestid beetles prefer the darkness. Everyone likes some fresh air, but air circulation has many other benefits for your beetle colony. Rest a screened lid and frame over the top of the container. It can keep out other insects and pests, such as mites and flies. Circulation also prevents mold from growing inside. You might not always have a specimen for your colony. However, beetles still need to stay nourished. Scraps of meat or fish can help provide your colony with a steady food supply, which will help it grow to support your taxidermy process. To provide a source of drinking water, spray the specimen or food source with water or keep a moist paper towel on the container bottom. Healthy, happy beetles yield the best skull cleaning results. Browse our website for more information on containers and caring for your beetle colony, or contact us today for assistance. **DERMESTID BEETLES DO THE WORK OF EATING ALL THE FLESH OFF OF SKULLS AND BONES IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW WHEN BUYING DERMESTID BEETLES:** we have been getting many calls from people who have bought beetles from E-bay or other vendors and because many of them only sell bugs and do not really clean skulls, call us for our advice. They thought they were getting a good deal, but the nature of these calls were concerning other bugs/parasites that were also in their beetles when they arrived. We know of 2 e-bay sellers who's beetles are infested with mites. You may not notice the mites unless you look with a dissecting scope or good Magnifying Glass. Colonies with mites will survive for awhile, but will not make a long-term sustainable population. We guarantee our bugs are mite free. If you are looking to buy from other sellers, ask them if they guarantee their beetles are free of these parasites. Better yet, ask to see pictures of the bugs they will be buying **SHOW ME THE BUGS!** When we collect beetles for beetle orders, we separate them from 95% of the debris "frass" that accumulate in the colony. This way, we can get an accurate count on how many bugs you are actually getting. We have actually counted them, then weigh them and make sure all orders are getting the correct amount (plus some!). We NEVER get any complaints about how many bugs our customers recieved. Of course adults are heavier than tiny larvae, so we make slight adjustments depending on the majority of age classes in the order. Here are some pics of some quantities of bugs. Beware of sellers who tell you they will ship you your bugs in the waste ("Frass") material. It is impossible to really see how many bugs are in there. Here is a pic of a bunch of bugs in frass: Because ADULT beetles (egg laying) are necessary to immediately build a population, make sure you are getting plenty of adults when you buy bugs. Many businesses will sell you mainly small larvae which will not increase your colony size until they reach adulthood and lay eggs. This could take up to 2 months before you have any new hatchlings in your colony. Many businesses will tell you 100-300 beetles and larvae are enough to immediately begin cleaning skulls. This may be true if you were cleaning mice skulls, but to clean big game animals, you need thousands of beetle larvae. To attain numbers this high it takes time to build your colonies. Do not be fooled by people claiming you can build a working colony in a few weeks from a handful of larvae. Getting adult beetles is the key, and even if you started with 500 adults, it would take a month before all the baby larvae were big enough to eat large volumes of meat. The number one reason people buy their beetles from us is that we continue to help and support our customers whenever they have a question about beetle care, skull cleaning, degreasing, whitening and mounting. We have been cleaning skulls with Dermestid beetles for 25 years, and have experience with virtually all game species. We do a LARGE volume of skulls and have the answers to your skull taxidermy questions. Most people boil skulls until the meat literally falls off. While cooking, the melted fat soaks into the bone. This results in greasy yellow skulls. Using beetles eliminates this problem. The dermestid or carpet beetle belongs to the family Dermestidae. Dermestids feed on dry-moist animal material. There are many species of Dermestid beetles that are native to N. America and will invariably show up at a carcass. Domestic colonization of wild species has proven to be very difficult at best. The species most easily colonized is Dermestes maculatus. These beetles undergo complete metamorphosis; that is, egg, larval, pupal, and adult stages. The complete life cycle lasts about 45 days per generation. Adults (beetle looking), lay eggs which are too small to be seen with the naked eye. A few days later very small larvae hatch out which begin looking for their first meal. The larvae continue eating and molting 8 times before they reach about 7 of an inch in length. This growing/molting period lasts about 30 days. It is the larvae that do the majority of the cleaning. The large larvae then find a quite spot and pupate. As they pupate their last outer larvae skin falls off leaving them somewhat yellow in appearance. 7 days later out comes an adult. Within a day or two the adult is laying 4-5 eggs a day and the whole process begins anew. The adults live for about 3 monthsWe are doing all kinds of experiments with the bugs all the time, as they have become part of our local high school biology departments species of interest. We will update any new information we learn this winter/spring. Here, we have learned how to make them "expose themselves" to sex them. Once a dermestid beetle colony is well established (2-3 months), a deer skull can be cleaned in a day or two. Colonies can become extremely productive. The bear skull pictured above was cleaned by the beetles in less than 24 hrs. Easy containers are plastic bins bought from large department stores. These bins last a year or so and cannot be beat at roughly \$10 each. Heated sheds or heat lamps can keep your colonies warm during the winter months. Maintenance is at a minimum to keep the colony healthy, the only drawback is the smell that a colony can create. A discrete location or some ventilation is a must. The beetles perform best at 70 - 80 degree temperatures, so keeping them warm is a must. They do not go dormant if temperatures drop below freezing, they die. **WE GUARANTEE LIVE DELIVERY** There are 3 options for purchasing dermestid beetles: Buy 2 of our #2 Kits of over 2000 bugs each, and we throw a 3rd one in for free. So you get over 6000 bugs!. Thats enough bugs to start cleaning skulls right away! Just Buy 2 of our #2 kits within 5 minutes and we will include the 3rd for free. Limited time offer! When you purchase our #1 "STARTER KIT" we will include: 1. An assortment of 300+ live adult beetles,larvae, and pupae. We guarantee a minimum of 50 adults which are necessary to begin new colonies. 2. Plenty of bedding material that the beetles prefer to lay their eggs in. 3. 2 pages of instruction on how to construct/maintain your colony. \$55.00 + \$12.50 shipping/handlingWhen you purchase our #2 "SUPER STARTER KIT" we will include over 2000 bugs!: 1. An assortment of Over 2000 adults,larvae, and pupae. Guarantee over 200 adults. Equiv. of over 6 #1 kits (over \$150 savings) 2. Plenty of bedding material that the beetles prefer to lay their eggs in. 3. 2 pages of instruction on how to construct/maintain your colony. This Kit will get you cleaning skulls in 3-4 weeks. this option is will also enable you to start multiple colonies at once. \$230.00 + \$16.50 shipping/handlingScroll Down to Order OnlineAllow up to 7 business days for arrival (very cold temps will delay orders, we will e-mail you if your order is delayed) We cannot ship out of country (sorry Canada) Select the item below that you would like to order. Please enter your correct email address. Your order will be confirmed by email. Standard Beetle Kit with 300+ beetles+ larvae/instructions/bedding Over 6 #1 Kits. Over 2000 beetles/larvae for speedy colony generation or multiple colonies

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