Ivory Millipede Care Guide

Chicobolus spinigerus

Deep edible substrate is the foundation of care. Keep moist refuges intact, replenish decomposing hardwood material and leave buried animals undisturbed.

Species Profile

Common name: Ivory Millipede

Scientific name: *Chicobolus spinigerus*

Adult size: Usually about 2-3.5 in (5-9 cm) body length

Average lifespan: 5-7 years

Native range: Southeastern United States, especially Florida

Habitat and activity: Terrestrial/burrowing detritivore in leaf litter and decaying hardwood

Diet: Decaying hardwood leaves and soft rotten wood; produce as extras

Care difficulty: Beginner

Shopping List

- Secure ventilated enclosure with the floor area and substrate depth described under Housing.
- Pesticide-free decaying hardwood leaf litter, soft white-rotted hardwood and suitable soil; low cork cover.
- Sprayer, digital thermometer, and small portions of supplementary vegetables.
- Optional springtails; a small calcium source can be offered separately.

Housing

A footprint of about 20 × 10 in (51 × 25 cm) is a useful starting point for a few adults. Provide substrate at least as deep as the animal is long where practical; start with 4-6 in (10-15 cm) or more. More space and food are needed as the colony grows.

Lighting & UVB

Provide an ordinary day/night cycle with shaded retreats. Specialized UVB is not an established requirement for these millipedes. Avoid direct sunlight and lamps that heat or dry the substrate.

Heating & Temperature

A useful daytime range is 70-78°F (21-26°C), with cooler sheltered areas and a modest night drop toward 68-74°F (20-23°C). Ordinary room conditions often suffice; measure the actual enclosure.

Keep the enclosure away from direct sun, radiators and hot equipment. Do not use bottom heat to dry burrowing substrate. If the room is too cold, stabilizing the room is usually easier to control than heating a small enclosure directly.

Humidity & Ventilation

Continuously moist deep substrate; partly drier surface with ventilation. Check moisture below the surface with minimal disturbance at an edge. Air humidity alone cannot tell you whether a buried animal has access to water.

Water one portion of the substrate as needed so moist deep refuges remain available. Keep drainage and ventilation effective. Do not dry the entire enclosure or flood it to create humidity.

Water & Hydration

Hydration comes primarily from moist substrate and moisture-rich food. A large open water dish is unnecessary and can drown small offspring. Maintain moisture in the deeper refuge without digging through occupied molt chambers.

Use clean water and equipment free of pesticide or detergent residue. Small produce portions support hydration but cannot replace moist substrate or the main detritus diet.

Substrate

The substrate is not just bedding - it is the millipede's primary food source. Provide at least 4-6 inches, ideally about as deep as the adult millipede is long.

A good mix starts with pesticide- and fertilizer-free organic topsoil, then adds generous amounts of decaying hardwood leaf litter and soft white-rotted hardwood. Mix some of the leaves and wood throughout the soil and keep another thick layer of whole leaves on the surface.

Avoid: cedar, pine, aromatic softwoods, chemically treated wood, fertilized potting soil, pesticide-exposed yard debris, and plain coco fiber as the main substrate. Coco fiber can hold moisture, but it does not replace the edible hardwood and leaf material millipedes need.

Food & Feeding

Most of an ivory millipede's diet should come from decomposing hardwood leaves and rotten wood already inside the enclosure. Keep these foods available at all times and replenish them as they disappear.

Supplement the substrate with small portions of squash, zucchini, carrot, sweet potato, cucumber, apple, banana, mushroom, or similar produce 1-3 times per week. Offer only what the animals can finish and remove soft leftovers before they spoil.

Optional protein: A very small pinch of fish flakes, shrimp pellets, nutritional yeast, or a balanced isopod/millipede food can be offered about once a week. This is supplemental - not a replacement for leaf litter and rotting wood.

Supplements

A small separate piece of cuttlebone or a little plain calcium carbonate can be offered. The optimum supplemental calcium dose is not established, and a calcium source cannot compensate for poor edible substrate. Routine reptile multivitamin or D3 dusting is not recommended.

Decor & Enrichment

Cover the surface with leaf litter and provide cork bark, rotten hardwood, moss, and a few sturdy hardwood branches. These items give the millipedes dark resting areas, help stabilize humidity, and provide additional surfaces for grazing and climbing.

Handling & Behavior

Handle briefly, with clean hands, close to the enclosure or a soft surface. Support the body and let the animal walk; never pull an animal out of its coil or excavate it for handling.

Defensive secretions can irritate skin and eyes or stain skin. Wash hands afterward, keep them away from eyes and mouth, and avoid contact for anyone with sensitivity. Falls can cause serious injury.

Cleaning & Routine Maintenance

Check moisture, temperature, fresh-food spoilage and the supply of edible leaves/wood regularly. Remove spoiled extras while preserving the established detritus substrate and buried refuges.

Replenish decomposing leaves and wood as consumed. Do not perform a deep full substrate change while animals may be molting underground. If contamination demands intervention, plan the transfer carefully and preserve safe moist chambers where possible.

Cohabitation

Same-species colonies are appropriate when edible substrate, moisture and space are sufficient. Mixed-sex colonies may reproduce. Avoid mixing species with different moisture needs or adding predatory/competitive cleanup animals without understanding their effects on eggs and molts.

Molting & Seasonal Changes

Buried animals may remain out of sight for weeks or longer. Molting is an extremely vulnerable period: leave chambers undisturbed and maintain safe deep moisture and temperature. Do not dig up an animal simply to confirm it is alive.

Surface activity can vary with environmental conditions. Reduced activity is not a reason to dry all soil, force-feed or repeatedly handle the animal. Review conditions if several animals show abnormal behavior or decline.

Reproduction

Mixed-sex colonies may lay eggs in the substrate and produce tiny offspring. Keep edible substrate and appropriate deep moisture available, use fine ventilation gaps and avoid deep stirring that destroys egg or molt chambers. Population growth may require additional space and food.

Common Health Concerns

- Dehydration or unsuitable edible substrate: review deep moisture and the ongoing leaf/wood supply; fresh fruit alone will not correct poor habitat.
- Failed molts or injury: do not disturb underground animals; avoid falls and hazardous sharp decor.

- Contamination: pesticide residues, treated wood and spoiled supplemental food can harm a colony. Persistent decline deserves advice from an experienced millipede keeper or an exotic veterinarian familiar with invertebrates.