Painted Lady Caterpillar Care & Instructions
DFW Butterfly Release - 682-238-0026

Thank you for choosing our Painted Lady Caterpillar Kit! Please take a moment to read these instructions so you can know what to expect over the next few weeks as your caterpillars grow and transform.

Setting Up Your Caterpillars

- Choose an indoor location that is about room temperature (68-78°F).
- Do NOT place it in direct sunlight. This will overheat and kill the caterpillars.
- Handle with care when moving or observing the caterpillars. Avoid shaking or tapping.
- Keep the lid closed to maintain food moisture
- No additional food, watering, or cleaning required

What to Expect as They Grow

Over the next 5 to 10 days your caterpillars will eat, poop, grow, rest, and repeat until they are ready to pupate into a chrysalis. Here are some things to expect along the way!

FRASS: You'll notice small brown "crumbs" in the cup which is frass, or caterpillar poop. It is totally normal.
SILK: The caterpillars will become more active and spin silk webbing as they settle in and develop. They use this silk in the wild to protect themselves while they eat.
INACTIVE CATERPILLARS: These are usually caterpillars preparing to molt. They will rest for 12-24 hours before molting. Do not disturb them during this time.
HANGING UPSIDE DOWN FROM THE LID: This means the caterpillar is preparing to turn into a chrysalis soon.

Chrysalis Formation

Newly formed chrysalises will need to be left undisturbed for another 48 hours to harden so they can be safely moved later.

Moving Chrysalises to Pop-Up Enclosure

After all chrysalises have hardened they can be transferred to a pop up enclosure where they will sit for the next 7-10 days until they emerge.

1. Place a small paper towel on the bottom of the enclosure to catch liquid that will be released when the butterflies emerge.
2. Open the cup and remove the coffee-filter paper.
3. Pin or tape the paper high on the inside wall of the pop-up enclosure. It does not need to be hanging from the top.
4. Make sure the chrysalises hang freely so butterflies have room to stretch their wings.

** **If a chrysalis has fallen inside the cup**, let it harden for 48 hours. Remove chrysalis from the cup and place on a paper towel in the bottom of the pop up enclosure. The butterfly will emerge and crawl up the side of the enclosure to dry its wings. The chrysalis will wiggle when you handle it so be prepared.

Butterflies Emerging

Butterflies will typically emerge 7 to 10 days after pupating. There are a few signs that will let you know when the butterfly is going to emerge soon. In order of occurrence, they are:

- The chrysalis darkens slightly
- Wing patterns become visible through the chrysalis
- Wing colors (orange & black) visible through the chrysalis

When the butterfly emerges its wings will look soft and crumpled. The butterfly pumps fluid into its wings over the next 10-15 minutes. This will show up as a red liquid, called meconium, that butterflies expel after filling out their wings. Again, this is totally normal. Not blood.

Once its wings are fully filled out, they will still be wet and need to dry over the next 2 to 4 hours. Try not to disturb them during this time.

Feeding Your Butterflies

Newly emerged butterflies may not eat for the first 24 hours. You may offer the following on a small dish at the bottom of the enclosure:

- Small slices of fruit like orange, watermelon or over-ripe banana
- A sugar-water mix (1 cup water + 1 tbsp sugar) on a paper towel or cotton ball
- Gatorade (regular, not low-calorie) on a paper towel or cotton ball

Change out fruit or liquid diet out daily. Do not add water to the enclosure.

Adult Butterflies

Painted Lady butterflies live as adults for about 2 to 3 weeks. You may enjoy them for a few days before releasing but please be aware:

- After 2-3 days adults will begin to mate and soon after begin laying eggs on the sides of the enclosure.
- Within 3 days of being laid those eggs will begin hatching and you will have hundreds of caterpillars needing to be fed.

HERE'S A TIP! If you see two butterflies with their rear ends attached to each other, they are mating. It is highly suggested to release the butterflies within the next day once you see this clue so you can avoid the responsibility of hundreds of extra caterpillars.

Releasing Your Butterflies

The weather should be at least 50F and sunny to successfully release Painted Lady butterflies. Any cooler or cloudy and the butterflies will not fly. During summer months, try to release the butterflies in the morning when it is cooler so they have time to find a place to feed and rest during the heat of the day.

The earliest you can release your butterfly is after their wings have dried and it begins walking or fluttering around in its enclosure.

When you are ready to release your butterflies, simply go outside in a sunny area and open the enclosure. You may need to use your hands to coax the butterflies out. If the weather is cooler, they may perch on your hand or body before they warm up enough to fly. Have your camera ready during this moment!

Again, it is not recommended to keep the butterflies for more than 3 days due to the possibility of eggs being laid. If you wish to keep them for the duration of their life (2-3 weeks) and want to avoid eggs, it is suggested to put them in separate enclosures.

Clean Up

Your pop-up enclosure can be reused. Simply wash with warm water and antibacterial soap, rinse well, and air dry. It is highly recommended to soak the enclosure in 10% bleach water for two minutes, rinse, and air dry to fully disinfect it.

If you have any questions along the way please feel free to reach out to us and we gladly assist you! Call or text 682-238-0026 any time!