

Omura congrua (Walker 1870)

By Curtis Lakin

Background

This wingless Orthopteran is one of 400 species in the family Pyrgomorphidae. It originates from the South American rainforests and is often referred to as the “mimic grasshopper” or “toothpick grasshopper”. It is new to culture and has only become available from captive bred stocks for 2012. The head apparatus is not dissimilar to the horsehead grasshoppers (Proscopiidae) having bulbous eyes mounted high on the fastigium. Its features make it a truly endearing invertebrate pet.

Description and life History

The adult female of the species has a very attractive apple green colour on the dorsal side and variable from mustard yellow to grey on the underside with a body length of up to 40mm. The males are smaller and slimmer and generally olive green and brown. Nymphs hatch after about 3 - 5 months, from eggs laid into the ground in batches of 4 – 8. When the nymphs hatch they are dark grey and rather large for the size of the adult and take up position resting on leaves and stems. As nymphs progress through the instars they either develop an apple green or straw colour, (sometimes mottled) and often have a black smudge marking on the dorsal side of the abdomen. They take about 4-8 months to mature and as adults live for 6 months or more. The whole life cycle takes less than a year from one generation to the next.

Culture Instructions

This species tolerates a range of temperatures from room temp (15°C) to very warm (28°C). Moderate to high humidity is required and they can be kept in a small cage with 10 – 20% ventilation. Regular cleaning out to prevent the growth of moulds is recommended otherwise fatalities can occur. The species appears to enjoy communal living at all stages without any signs of cannibalism. Feeding is relatively straight forward as they readily take raspberry and bramble. In addition they particularly like certain members of the honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae) including *Weigela* and *Abelia*. The nymphs are very susceptible to being caught by spiders webs therefore the cage should not have any entry gaps to allow small spiders in and the food plant should be thoroughly checked / washed to prevent introducing spiders into the cage. Egg laying occurs after adults have been mature for several months. Eggs are best laid in loose peat leaf litter incubated in a humid but ventilated environment.

