

## THE DIGESTION OF A MOUSE BY A TARANTULA

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In January 1928 a Central American tarantula came into my possession. During the two years that I have had it I have fed the tarantula a number of different animals. Among them have been cockroaches, wasps, bees, katy-dids, grasshoppers, flies, larvae of moths, and mice. These were placed in the cage alive and the spider was allowed to capture and kill them at its leisure. At times days passed before the spider would feed. At other times the prey would no more than touch the sand in the bottom of the cage when the tarantula would capture it and digest it.

On November 2, 1929 the tarantula was given a small mouse. The mouse was thrown so that the spider could easily grasp it. The mouse was held by the hind portion of the abdomen in such a position that the digestive fluids from the mouth and stomach might flow out upon the mouse. The mouse was very young and did not offer a great deal of resistance. It continued to move for twenty-five minutes or more and I do not believe that the tarantula used its poison on this victim. The mouse was fed at 3-45 P.M. and at 8:00 A.M. the next day the mouse had completely disappeared. I made a careful examination of the contents of the cage in order to discover any remains of the mouse that might be there. I found nothing save a piece of intestine about two inches long. There was no sign of hair, cartilage, bone or any other difficultly digestible substances.

On November 18, 1929 a second mouse was placed in the cage with the tarantula. This mouse was approximately three weeks old and very active. It ran about the cage quite oblivious to danger. For an hour the tarantula exhibited defensive reactions only. It never offered to strike and merely backed away whenever the mouse came near. Several times the tarantula allowed the mouse to crawl over it without any show of fight. During the next hour the action of the tarantula was more on the offensive. Twice it attempted to strike the mouse without success. The two had been placed in the cage at 2:00 P.M. and at 5:30 the tarantula had succeeded in striking the mouse. After the chelicerae had been inserted in the shoulder of the mouse, it was less than a minute before the mouse was dead. It ran about 12 inches and seemed to have great difficulty in moving its fore legs. It turned and fell over on its side, took two or three very deep breaths and died. The spider did not offer to eat this mouse and the latter was removed after four hours. This experiment was carried out in the photographic dark room as the tarantula is a nocturnal animal.

Since this experiment two other mice have been used without any positive results.

