



CARING FOR YOUR FROG

ABOUT FROGS

There are many different species of frogs in the pet trade, including tree frogs, dart frogs, narrow-mouth frogs, bullfrogs, and horned frogs. Captive breeding has produced a variety of colors and patterns, increasing the choices for the pet owner.

Although frogs have certain care requirements in common, the various species originate from different continents, elevations, and habitats. This sheet provides basic considerations for successful frog care, but research the needs of your chosen species to get specific information on the proper care of your pet.

ENCLOSURE

Most frogs can be kept in a 10– or 20-gallon terrarium. The configuration and size of the enclosure will depend on the number of frogs as well as their behavior and habits. For example, tree frog habitat should be relatively tall to allow for structure or live plants. Other species, such as bullfrogs and Pacman frogs are ground dwellers and need horizontal space.

The cover on a frog terrarium should be secure and allow some ventilation while maintaining a moist environment in the tank. Choosing the correct lid will depend on where the enclosure is placed and the normal humidity level in your home. Tropical rain forest frogs (e.g., dart frogs) need humidity between 70-100% and ventilation should be minimal. Australian frogs prefer less humid environments.

HABITAT

The interior of your frog's home should reflect its native habitat. Climbing branches and live or artificial plants are appropriate for tree frogs. For ground-dwelling species, provide hiding places and burrowing substrate.

Frog enclosures need to be moist but not wet. Regular misting with non-chlorinated water may be necessary in areas with low humidity. Research the humidity requirements for your species. A hygrometer is inexpensive and useful to check humidity levels in the enclosure.

Substrate choices include damp paper towels, peat moss, potting soil (without chemical additives), sphagnum moss, and coconut husks/ fiber. In some cases, layers of substrate allow drainage to maintain overall humidity while keeping the top layer from excess moisture. Avoid large gravel in enclosures with frogs that feed on the floor of their habitat.

Many popular frogs are from tropical and sub-tropical areas with relatively constant daylight; provide 10-12 hours natural or artificial light for these species. Fluorescent lights are a good choice; incandescent bulbs may overheat the tank.

DIET

Insects comprise the bulk of the diet of most captive frog species. Provide a variety including crickets, flightless fruit flies, insect larvae (mealworms, waxworms), roaches and grasshoppers. Live or commercially prepared diets are available. Larger species, such as horned frogs or bullfrogs, can be fed small mice occasionally.

Live insects should be dusted with a calcium and vitamin supplement occasionally. The frequency of dusting will vary with the age of your pet, ranging from daily for very young frogs to once or twice a week for adults.

WATER

Keep a shallow water dish with non-chlorinated fresh water in the enclosure. Clean the dish as needed and change the water regularly.

TEMPERATURE

Most frogs do well with a daytime temperature between 75°F and 85°F; night time temperatures should generally be above 68°F. Normal household temperature will be suitable much of the year. However, in cooler months, an additional heat source may be needed (low to medium wattage incandescent bulb; under tank mat heater).

KEEPING YOU AND YOUR FROG HEALTHY

Frogs are susceptible to bacterial and fungal infections. Symptoms include “red-leg syndrome”, emaciated appearance, lethargic behavior and skin abnormalities. The fungal disease chytridio-mycosis is found in captive and wild frogs and is responsible for mass die-offs of many amphibian species around the world. Consult with an amphibian veterinarian if these symptoms persist.

Diseases are often associated with poor water quality or other problems in the frog’s captive environment. Good hygiene, care and minimal handling is the best approach to preventing illness and reducing the chance of your frog transmitting disease to humans. Along with providing the proper diet, temperature, and humidity, follow these steps to maintain your pet’s health.

- Oils and residues on your hands can be harmful to amphibians. Although some species are less sensitive (green tree frog, White’s tree frog), wear latex gloves when handling or moving frogs. In all cases, take steps to make sure your frog’s skin does not dry out during handling.
- Spot clean the enclosure daily. Weekly maintenance should include thoroughly cleaning the branches and rocks, inspecting the substrate and removing excessively wet or decomposing material.
- All bowls and dishes should be cleaned daily and disinfected weekly.
- Don’t be surprised if you see your frog eating its shed skin.

AVOIDING HUMAN ILLNESS

All amphibians secrete toxins in their skin that may cause a reaction in humans. In addition, frogs may have bacteria, such as Salmonella, that can cause disease in humans. Fortunately, a few simple precautions will help keep you healthy:

- Wear latex gloves when handling frogs or any-thing in their habitat. After removing your gloves, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

- Avoid handling frogs or cleaning their habitat if you have open wounds. If you must handle anything in the habitat, cover any skin cuts.
- Avoid close contact, such as kissing or snuggling.
- Never use food-preparation areas to clean frog habitats or anything in their habitats.
- Clean your frog's habitat outside if possible. If you clean the habitat in the bathroom, disinfect the area completely immediately afterwards.

Amphibians are not recommended for children under the age of five. This includes households or school settings. Children younger than 5 years of age, people with weak immune systems, and senior citizens should not handle or touch amphibians or reptiles or their habitats because they are at a higher risk for serious illness and hospitalization from Salmonella germs.

This is a basic guide. There are books and online resources, or contact your veterinarian, for in-depth information.

