



Terrestrial Frogs and Toads

Amanda Zellar, DVM

The most common terrestrial frog and toad species kept as pets are the African Bullfrog (*Pyxicephalus adspersus*) and the Ornate horned frogs aka Pac-man frogs (*Ceratophrys ornate*). African bull frogs are large frogs which must be kept alone due to their aggressive nature. These guys can be a bit over enthusiastic when eating, so be careful they don't get your fingers! They can live to be over 35 years old. Males have yellow throats while females are cream colored. Ornate horned frogs aka Pac-man frogs are as the name suggests, also voracious eaters with large mouths. Should they mistake your finger for food and bite, do not panic. They don't have teeth and will realize soon enough that you are less tasty than they originally suspected and let go.

Health Care: Frogs and toads can be very good at hiding illness. We recommend biannual exams and fecal float. Weighing your pet at home can be a good way to catch illnesses early. Please bring them in to see us if their weight changes by 10%, or more. Common problems include: nutritional deficiencies from diets lacking variety, wounds, fungal infections.

Husbandry concerns: House new amphibians by themselves until cleared by your veterinarian, often a quarantine period of six months. Do not keep different species in the same enclosure to avoid introducing diseases and because some species produce compounds through their skin that can be harmful to others. Keep handling to a minimum as the oils in human skin are harmful to amphibians. Always wash your hands before and after handling. Be sure the lid is well fitted and does not contain any holes through which the amphibian can escape as they can be very crafty and some are good climbers. Line the aquarium with 2 inches of aquarium gravel, topped with sterile potting soil (available from plant nurseries), topped with a piece of turf or moss. Provide multiple cave hides. A large shallow water dish that the frog can climb into is required. The humidity must be kept high; moss and live plants can help with this. Monitor the temperature with a digital thermometer. Any heating element should be placed at one end of the tank to allow for a temperature gradient and the frog should not be able to touch the heating element. Either a mesh top or rows of drilled quarter inch holes should provide some airflow to decrease pathogen growth in the habitat. Mist animals daily. Clean bedding out on a weekly basis. Provide climbing objects, but remember there is no good way to fully clean wooden items, and they should be periodically thrown away and replaced. Temperature requirements vary by species. African bull frogs should be kept at 75F, cooling down to 67-70F at night. While Pac-man frogs should be kept at 80-82F during the day and 75-78 at night. White lights should be turned off at night. Cages should be lit with a UVB light of 5% or less for 10-12hrs per day. Be careful with the use of disinfectants when cleaning and wash them off very well, as they can be toxic if absorbed through amphibian skin. Any cage furniture collected from outside should be disinfected. You can do this by baking them on low in the oven for an hour, placing them in boiling water for 15 minutes, or by soaking in

More on the back!

a mild bleach solution for a few hours and then rinsing with clean water and soaking in clean water for 24-48 hours. If you can still smell bleach on it, it needs to be rinsed and soaked more. This is to get rid of bacteria and fungus that may be harmful to your pet. In water dishes and tanks, always use dechlorinated water or bottled water, as chlorine can be harmful to amphibians.

Diet: Terrestrial amphibians generally find their food by watching it move. Food items should be rotated and varied to provide a balanced diet. Food should be smaller than the amphibian's head is wide, with the exception of soft worms. Earthworms, crickets, beetles, pillbugs, moths and other insects are good food items. Do not feed fireflies as they are poisonous! Provide food for any insects left in the cage so they don't chew on the amphibian! Note that crickets are relatively high in cholesterol and having them over represented in the diet may lead to cholesterol deposits in the skin or eyes. These insects should be misted in a zip-loc bag, then shake-and-baked with a calcium-only powder coating before feeding to the amphibian. We recommend using Repashy SuperCal NoD. A pre-formed vitamin A supplement, such as Repashy A Plus, is also recommended weekly. Some Species may require a multivitamin supplement, such as Repashy Supervite, every 2 weeks. Avoid lots of mealworms, feed mostly as treats. Larger frogs and toads can be fed fish or rodents as well. Live fish can be fed, but rodents should be pre-killed as live mice can bite and severely injure your pet. Hold pre-killed rodents with forceps, you may have to move them a bit to get the animal's attention. Insects should be housed separately from the amphibian, with only a few offered for feeding to avoid stress.

