

# Hilltop Pet & Aquariums

## Frog Information Sheet

43 Main South Road, O'Halloran Hill. SA. 5158

Ph: (08) 8322 1888

Open Monday - Friday 9:30am-6pm Weekends & Public Holidays 10am - 5pm

This information sheet is going to run through the best methods for keeping frogs. In this industry, everyone has their own opinion. We will steer you in the right direction with correct information and techniques for keeping frogs.

### Frog Breeds

There are over 200 different frog breeds native to Australia, but only a few are available in captivity. The most commonly kept tropical frogs include Green Tree Frogs, White Lipped Tree Frogs, Red Eyed Green Tree Frogs and Green and Golden Bell Frogs.

Non-tropical frogs (those that do not require heating) include Marsh Frogs, Pobblebunks, Painted Frogs, Perons Tree Frogs and Brown Tree Frogs.

You must look at the *type* (tropical/ non-tropical) and the *size* of frogs you are wanting to keep so you know what their housing requirements are. See our in-store frog size and tank suitability chart for more details.

### Housing

The most commonly used form for housing frogs is a glass tank. They are easy to clean and look attractive.

Tanks for tree frogs need to be at least 20" high and 3/4 land. Tree frogs are arboreal, meaning that they spend the majority of their time high up off the ground in trees and plants.

Gravel (no sharp edges, not too small/large) is generally used as a base filling. Peat-moss based potting soil and sphagnum moss can be used but must be replaced regularly to stop harmful bacteria and fungus from growing.

An alternate way of flooring is by means of a raised floor. This is to improve the filtration in your tank, reducing the high cleaning requirements. Raised floors should be used in conjunction with canister filters. Canister filters can also be set up to have your own waterfall in the tank.

Live plants such as philodendrons and bromeliads (without spiky edges) can be used but don't tend to last too long due to the high humidity, the weight of the frogs climbing on it and the frogs bodily waste.

Plastic and silk plants are a better and cheaper option. Sticks and branches can be added but ensure they have not been sprayed with any chemicals or carry any bugs or disease.

Bamboo stakes, topiary branches and imitation vines are a much better option as they do not contain any germs/parasites, are more durable and easier to clean.

A ventilated cover is essential. Mesh/wire combination is the best. If housing tropical frogs, you can place acrylic or polystyrene over the uncovered areas to assist keeping the heat in if necessary.

Assorted backgrounds are available to enhance the look of your tank e.g. rainforest pictures, or for a more realistic look Universal Rock is also available in many shapes and sizes.

## Water

Filtration, in the form of a power filter, pond pump or canister filter, is a good idea as it eliminates the need for frequent water changes. If no filter is used, water should be changed *at least* every two days as still water becomes stagnant very quickly.

All Adelaide tap water must be de-chlorinated using a tap water conditioner to make the water safe. Chlorine will burn their skin. The de-chlorinator must be used at a triple dose as recommended by SA Water to remove all the chlorine/chloramines.

Frogs excrete a lot of waste into the water which then produces Ammonia. Ammonia is very harmful to frogs. If using a filter it is recommended to purchase an Ammonia Test Kit. An stick-on Ammonia Sensor is now available which allows you to monitor the levels at a glance. The kit/sensor will indicate when the water needs to be changed. There are also ammonia detoxifying products that will make any ammonia present in the tank less harmful to the frogs.

Frogs should have access to a body of water large enough so they can sit completely underwater and have a swim. Frogs do not drink like normal pets, they absorb their water through their skin. Their water must always be clean.

## Heating (for TROPICAL frogs ONLY)

Tropical frogs *need* to be heated to temperatures ranging in the mid 20°C's to low 30°C's, only dropping to cooler temperatures at night but no lower than 10°C, which can be deadly. Heating elements *must* be protected with a wire cage to ensure the frogs do not burn themselves.

The heater is to stay on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A thermometer *must* be placed inside the tank to monitor the temperature.

Ceramic globes are the best and most economical form of heating. They allow proper photo periods as the globe emits no light whatsoever. For best results on large tanks, a small computer fan placed above the globe allows for even heat distribution.

Infrared globes can be used depending on the wattage. Low wattage globes are only recommended for use in smaller tanks as they do not provide much heat and do not last as long as a ceramic globe.

Aquarium heaters should not be used in frog tanks as the main source of heating it. If the heater is placed into the water the frog bathes in, the frog has no way of cooling itself down which is very important. Frogs are unable to control their own body temperature so they rely on the climate you provide them with to do so.

If you find your tank is losing too much heat, insulate the sides with polystyrene. Try placing a rainforest background onto sides of the tank followed by the polystyrene. This will make an attractive background free of unsightly cords, walls, etc. whilst insulating at the same time. You can cover the top of the tank to prevent heat from escaping but ensure you do not cover underneath the UV lighting area.

All heating should be connected to a surge arrester power board to help reduce the chances of blowing globes. When fitting globes, try not to screw the bulb in too tightly as this can also play a part in the bulb blowing.

## Humidity

Humidity is a very important factor when it comes to frog keeping. Most breeds of frog, tropical or not, like and need moisture. The humidity levels should be between 45%-85%. A hygrometer must be fitted to the inside of the tank to monitor the humidity levels.

To increase the humidity you can increase the area of water, but keep in mind the land area should still take up 2/3 to 3/4 of the tank. You can spray the tank with water twice a day (taking care not to spray the heater or UV light), add sphagnum moss or decrease the lids open mesh area. To decrease the humidity levels if they are too high, do the opposite.

If you cover the top of the tank to increase the humidity keep a watchful eye on the humidity levels. If the humidity is over 85% the frogs can suffocate.

## Winter Cooling

Winter cooling should only take place with healthy adult frogs, never young frogs or frogs with medical problems. Winter cooling is where frogs go into a state of semi-hibernation. Frogs that do not go into cooling can end up obese as they can not burn off their accumulated fat cells. The temperature should range from 16°C up to 18°C, but never dropping below 10°C for long periods of time (this will lead to death). Their food should be cut down to minimal amounts once a week. This should last for about 6 weeks and begin around the start of September.

## Lighting

UV lighting is *extremely* important to frogs. Without UVB, frogs cannot utilise the calcium or vitamin D<sub>3</sub> within their bodies.

Without calcium and vitamin D<sub>3</sub> they will develop rickets and other calcium related diseases and eventually die. Calcium deficient problems can take up to 6-24 months before symptoms begin to show, e.g. inability to jump, climb or feed. Without immediate veterinary attention, death will result. Calcium related problems take a lot of time, money, tender loving care and trips to the vet. It is a very costly exercise so prevention is the key.

The only way to provide UVB to your frog is by way of a reflector (a lighting unit that sits on top of the tank) fitted with a specific reptile UVB tube. Remember that placing the tank next to a window will **not** help as UVB cannot penetrate glass. UVB also cannot pass through glass or acrylic lids that is why we use frog wires as our tank lids.

UVA is also very important. UVA stimulates natural behaviour e.g. feeding. UVA is also found in the UVB tube and also in Reptile lamps. Lamps that provide day light are not recommended as a heat source for frogs as they have to be switched off at night, not giving them any heat during that time.

The reflector should be fitted with a Sylvaria Reptistar, Exo-Terra ReptiGlo 5.0 or a NEC Black Light. Tubes must be replaced every 8-12 months, after 12 months all the UVB will have dissipated. The tube will still light up after 12 months so it is recommended to date the tube with a marker so you know when to replace it.

Daylight lamps and green light bulbs are fine for lighting the tank (not heating, especially larger tanks) in *conjunction* with a UVB tube. They are not to be used *solely* as a UVB light as they omit **NO UVB**.

The UVB light is to be on for daylight hours only as to simulate natural day/night conditions. All lighting should be connected to a surge arrester power board to help reduce the chances of blowing globes.

When fitting globes, try not to screw the bulb in too tightly as this can also play a part in the bulb blowing.

## Handling

Frogs should be handled as little as possible. The only frogs that will tolerate you handling them is the Green Tree Frog, and that is generally only when they get bigger. You must always wash and rinse your hands thoroughly and leave them WET when you handle them. Dry hands on a frog, to them, feels much like sand paper which can damage their skin. Remember to wash your hands thoroughly after handling frogs or any other animal.

## Maintenance

Cleanliness is one of the most important things in frog husbandry. Frogs are susceptible to diseases that are generally caused by unclean conditions.

Regular cleaning of the tank, including gravel and all other accessories, is highly recommended. How often you clean it depends on how your tank is set up, the size of the tank and the number of frogs being kept.

Never use any chemicals, detergents, etc. when cleaning the tank. If they must be used, use a reptile cage/terrarium cleaner and rinse *thoroughly*. Frogs will ingest the chemicals through their skin and it could cause them serious harm.

## Health

Frogs can change colour without any reason. You should start to worry when they go off their food, look underweight, become bloated or become slow and lethargic. If any of these conditions occur, please seek contact us or seek veterinary advice.

## Feeding

A frogs diet consists mainly of live food including crickets, woodies and flies. Mealworms can be given but these should only be fed once or twice a week as a treat only. Mealworms mainly consist of fat and water therefore holding little nutritional value. Pinkies (baby mice) can be added to their diet as they get bigger, going onto larger mice when they are fully grown. Mice should always be purchased frozen and then thawed for feeding. Live mice must never be given as they can carry many internal parasites, e.g. worms, that can be harmful to the frog as well as doing damage to the frog if the mouse is alive. We strongly recommend against feeding wild insects to your frogs as they can be carrying disease or may have been sprayed. Commercial bred insects are disease free.

As a general rule, frogs will only tend to eat things that are moving, unless they are tame enough to eat from your hand.

If your tank permits, they can be fed ad-lib, otherwise frogs can eat 4-6 of the appropriate sized crickets per day. Remember that frogs are nocturnal animals so they prefer to eat late afternoon to night.

Food should be supplemented every 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> feed with calcium and vitamin powders or 'Gut Load'. Gut loading is a new concept and involves feeding the insects 'Gut Load' to ensure they contain the correct levels of vitamins, minerals and calcium for the frogs.

## Veterinary Care

You must be prepared to take any sick or injured animal to a vet without delay to minimize any pain or further complications to the health of your pet.

Something that may begin as a minor problem can easily end up developing into something major, and possibly life threatening, so it is advisable to contact your vet without delay.

This brochure was put together by the staff of Hilltop Pet & Aquariums as a general guide to assist you in raising your pet and advising requirements to keep your friend happy and healthy.

If you cannot provide the proper care and housing, we strongly suggest you not purchase the animal.

We have books available for sale should you require more information.

