



Axolotl Care

The Mexican Walking Fish or Axolotl makes an excellent easy care-pet. They have small, thin legs and feet, a finned tail for swimming and external gills for respiration. Even though Axolotls have legs they should not be removed from water as they cannot breathe air.

The Axolotl is an amphibian that stays in the 'tadpole' stage (the aquatic larval stage) and reproduces without turning into an adult salamander. It is because of this unique ability to not "grow up" that they are sometimes referred to as the 'Peter Pan' of the animal world. Axolotls have lost the ability to take the final step in their lifecycle and change into a salamander which lives on land and breathes air.

Axolotls are available in various colours including dark brown, spotted, albino, gold, olive and black. They can live for up to 15 years

Housing

An aquarium of 30 litres or more is suitable for housing 1 axolotl. The tank should be aerated and filtered. A partial water change of one third of the tank water should be performed every 1-2 weeks combined with gentle filter rinsing. Fresh water added to the aquarium must be pre treated with a product that removes chlorine and have conditioning salts added. This will keep the aquarium environment healthy.

Axolotls do well in an aquarium that is maintained between 12° C and 18° C and a pH of 7.0 to 7.5. A shallow layer of gravel can be scattered on the floor of the aquarium and by adding a piece or two of crushed coral the appropriate pH will be maintained. A box filter is required to keep the water clean and aerated.

The axolotl aquarium should only be dimly light as they are more active in low light and do not tolerate bright lights well.

Axolotls should not be kept in the same aquarium as fish because the fish may bite and damage the axolotl's gills. If many axolotls are kept together they may bite each other and cause injury. Damaged axolotls should be kept in a tank on their own while they heal. Interestingly axolotls' are able to regenerate new tissue to replace the damaged tissue and can even regenerate a new limb to replace the one that has been bitten off.



Feeding

Axolotls should be fed earthworms. Earthworms provide all the nutrition they need to stay happy and healthy. By using only a thin layer of gravel in the aquarium the earthworms will not be able to hide. This is important because worms that bury themselves die and pollute the water.

Axolotls will refuse to eat if the water temperature falls below 10°C or rises above 20°C. Axolotls should be fed twice weekly in the afternoon or evening as they are more active at this time.

They should receive 2 -3 worms per feed.

The box filter should be jiggled occasionally to remove any hiding earthworms.

Breeding

Axolotls reach breeding age at about 12 months. Males have a longer tail and a narrower head than the female. The male also has a swelling between the hind legs. The female lays 300 to 1000 eggs which hatch in about 2 weeks when kept at temperatures between 14 - 18°C. The best way to grow young axolotls is to move them into a fish free outside planted pond. Pond life will be the best starter food for baby axolotls. When grown to 4 – 6 cm long they can be placed into separate small aquaria and fed live “black worm”.

Enjoy your Axolotl!