

Green Tree Frog Care

Green Tree Frogs are easily the best known of all Australia's frogs. They are also both the most popular and most common pet frog.

They make excellent pets as they are long lived, relatively easy to maintain, and will also tolerate a small amount of handling. Reaching an adult size of over 10cm they have been known to live beyond 25 years. When buying your Green Tree Frogs it is best to select young animals to ensure that they were not collected from the wild and that you are not inheriting problems created by someone else's poor care. Starting with young frogs will also provide a long and happy experience with your frog. The following information should guarantee your success.

Enclosures

A variety of different containers may be used to house Green Tree Frogs. They must be water proof and non-toxic. Glass and plastics are the best materials, but be aware that some plastics are corroded by ultra violet (UV) light and may crack and break in a matter of months.

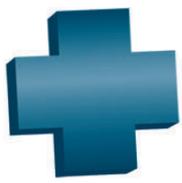
For visibility, longevity and aesthetic appeal a glass aquarium is best. Any enclosure must be secure and escape proof. A tight fitting wooden or aluminium frame covered with fly-wire provides the necessary ventilation and security while allowing the valuable UV light to reach the frogs. Use only fibreglass fly-wire as steel or aluminium provide abrasive surfaces on which the frogs will injure themselves. A standard 3ft (90cm) aquarium would adequately house three to four adult frogs.

Temperature/Heating

It is imperative that Green Tree Frogs be kept warm. Prolonged exposure to temperatures below 10°C will result in the death of your animals. The most effective way to heat your enclosure is by the use of an aquarium heater placed in the water. The water should be heated to 24-26°C and this should ensure that the air temperature remains above 18°C.

A waterfall or some other form of water movement will increase evaporation and help maintain and stabilise the temperature and humidity of the air. If excessive heat loss is occurring, part of the lid may be covered with glass or plastic.

Be sure however that the cover is not beneath the light fixture as it will stop the necessary UV light from reaching your frogs.



Lighting

Although Green Tree Frogs are largely nocturnal they shelter during the day in areas exposed to sunlight. It has been observed that in captivity a failure to provide ultra violet light has resulted in stunted and deformed growth, even death. The best way to provide your frogs with the UV they need is with a fluorescent light. There are many types of fluorescent lights that are now being marketed as full-spectrum (daylight). Make sure the tube you use is specifically designed for reptile and amphibian use, for example, Repti-Glo 5.0. UV fluorescent tubes should be replaced every 12-18 months, even if they are still running, as their UV output diminishes and at this point they are no longer useful (remember to write the date on each tube when it is installed).

Fluorescent fittings should always be within 60cm from the tank floor as the UV emitted will only penetrate this far. Lights should be placed on a timer for at least 8-10 hours a day - this helps to stimulate frogs and provides light for plant growth. For breeding, you may need to alter your day length with the seasons.

Water

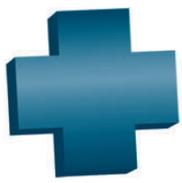
Maintaining water quality is an important part of amphibian husbandry. Fortunately Melbourne's water supply is suitable for Green Tree Frogs, and only requires the removal of chlorine before it can be used. This can be done in two ways. Either leave the water in a bucket for a day or two (the chlorine will evaporate away) or use one of the chlorine-neutralising chemicals available from most major aquariums.

If you are outside Melbourne consult a reputable aquarium dealer as to local water supply conditions. They may not be knowledgeable about frogs but will be able to advise you on making your water safe for aquarium fish, and this will be suitable for your frogs.

Water should be changed regularly; the frequency of changes will be dictated by the amount of water, the number and size of the frogs the presence/absence of aquatic plants and the presence/absence or type of filtration provided.

A standard 3ft aquarium with 15cm of water over half its area, three adult frogs and no plants or filtration may require changing weekly. When changing 100% of the water in a tank it is best to allow for the temperature change. Be sure that your heater is powerful enough to heat the water up to the required temperature quickly so as not to cause the tanks temperature to drop for more than a few hours.

Do not use hot water from the tap as it will contain copper which is toxic to frogs. A healthy growth of plants will help keep the water healthy and water changes will be needed less regularly. Plants will only be of use however if adequate light is provided to stimulate growth.



Filtration should be provided and this too will reduce the frequency of water changes. Most types of filtration may be used but it is important to ensure that the water is not too turbulent as this will trap tadpoles and possibly drown young frogs.

Although Green Tree Frogs can easily climb glass, it is important to provide numerous escapes from the water especially in the corners where young frogs tend to get trapped. Small frogs are often too weak to break the surface tension of the water when they have nothing but slippery glass to cling to. Part of or all of your tank may be covered in water.

Plants and Substrates

If you wish to have a land area for plants in your tank, it is important to ensure that it is well drained. Soil in aquariums tends to get waterlogged, and will both drown your plants and provide an ideal breeding ground for bacteria that produce wastes that can be harmful to your frogs.

The best plants for your enclosure are those which will survive hot, humid, low light conditions. These are usually understorey plants from tropical rainforests. Species of Ficus, Spathophyllum, palms and some orchids and bromeliads will do well as will most indoor plants. If you wash the soil off the roots of Spathophyllum and some palm species they will actually grow in the water.

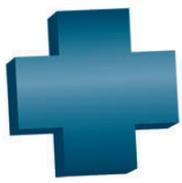
Feeding

In nature most frogs are almost totally insectivorous. In captivity the tendency to use substitute foods is one which must be avoided. The most common dietary problems seen in frogs are related to lack of calcium or too much protein in the diet.

Calcium powders are available at many pet stores and should be mixed in equal quantities with a multivitamin powder then dusted on food before feeding. Place your food insects in a plastic bag with a pinch of calcium/multivitamin powder and shake it till the food is well coated. All insects should be dusted every feeding.

Most frogs have not evolved to cope with a diet high in protein and the tendency to feed them young mice or strips of meat on tweezers will put extra strain on the frogs' organs, particularly the kidneys. If these foods are used regularly they will lead to gout, irreversible kidney damage and ultimately death. Variety is the spice of life and even a frog knows it! Feed your frog a variety of insects and invertebrates and you should have few diet related problems.

Juveniles will happily eat flies, moths, small crickets and cockroaches, and should have food available to them AT ALL TIMES. If young frogs are kept warm and offered plentiful food they will reach breeding size in about 8-12 months.



Adults will eat almost anything that moves and fits in their mouth, they should be offered about 10-20% of their own body size in food spread over 2-3 feeds each week.

Remove drowned insects so as not to foul the water, or feed your frogs individually by holding the insects on tweezers.

Enjoy your Green Tree Frog!

Good Luck and Happy Frogging!

Thanks to the Amphibian Research Centre for the notes

Contact the Amphibian Research Centre by mail:

Western Treatment Plant. New Farm Road Werribee, Victoria 3030

Phone: (03) 9742 3764 Fax (03) 9749 7518

Email: arc@frogs.org.au . Website: <http://frogs.org.au/arc/>

Licensing and Legal Matters

Almost all of Australia's frogs are currently, or are soon to be, protected. In Victoria it is an offence to remove from the wild, or interfere with, any frog, tadpole or spawn (frog's eggs). It is also necessary to have a license to keep most frogs and it is a condition of the licence that such frogs must be obtained from a legal source (usually captive breeding). No licence is required if you wish to keep Spotted Marsh Frogs. To keep Striped Marsh Frogs requires a Private Wildlife Basic Licence. The licence application forms are available from the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The forms are available online – you can find links from the licensing section of the ARC website [<http://frogs.org.au/arc/>]. It is necessary to purchase your licence before obtaining your frogs.

Licence Enquiries Ph 136 186 Mon-Fri 8am-8pm