



General axolotl care and health checks

Introduction

Axolotls make fascinating pets but are an intensive commitment. Caring for a pet axolotl is complex and requires a great deal of maintenance. Axolotls require an aquatic environment with very specific temperature, water quality and husbandry requirements. Axolotls can live for up to 10 years of age if cared for correctly.

Enclosures

Axolotls should be kept in an aquatic environment. They require the water temperature to be maintained between 14 and 19°C.

If water temperatures are higher than this it will stress your axolotl and can lead to anorexia and infections.

It is also important to ensure that your filter isn't creating too much water flow within the tank. Your axolotl shouldn't be pushed around in the tank by the flow of water. Excessive water flow can result in stress in your axolotl and subsequently lead to disease.

Substrate is required in the bottom of the tank to provide a place for good bacteria to live. Substrate should either be sand or large river stones. Pebbles should NOT be used as many axolotls will ingest these smaller stones and they can result in intestinal blockages and even death

Feeding

Axolotls can eat a variety of foods and should have a varied diet to ensure all of their nutritional needs are met. We recommend feeding young axolotls daily and adults every 2-3 days. Some food items that we recommend are:

Tubifex worms, bloodworms, shrimp, beef heart, insects, feeder fish and balanced pelleted foods.

Whole foods such as worms, shrimp and insects are more balanced and therefore better for your axolotl.



Health checks

To ensure that your axolotl is healthy, a health check should be performed just after purchase, by a veterinarian experienced with these animals. Regular examinations, once or twice a year, should be performed from then on. This is important because symptoms of disease in axolotls can be very subtle. During a health check consultation, we aim to do a number of different things. These include:

- A thorough physical examination
- Discussion of husbandry
- Weight check
- Dietary assessment
- Discussion and planning of further testing

Further testing includes the following:

Water quality testing

This is strongly recommended for all new patients as it assesses the general health of the environment in which your axolotl is living.

- Bring about 50mL of water from the aquarium / pond
- Do not clean the aquarium / pond prior to collecting the sample

Microscopic examination of faeces

Aim to bring a faecal sample in a sealed container. This can be collected from the tank/pond. Alternatively try feeding your axolotl in a container of tank water in the hope that they will also defaecate in this time.

- A wet smear will reveal worm eggs, flagellate infections and give an estimate of bacterial numbers. This is a normal part of consultations, and is free of charge.
- A faecal floatation is a more accurate way of determining worm burdens.

Did you know...

That axolotls are larval forms of terrestrial salamanders. They are in permanent 'neoteny' – their physiological development into salamanders is ceased so they remain permanently in their 'baby' form.

