



General frog care and health checks

Introduction

Frogs make fascinating pets but are an intensive commitment. Caring for a pet frog can be complex and requires a great deal of maintenance. Most species of frog that are kept in Australia require an aquatic and a land based habitat and have specific feeding, heating, water quality and husbandry requirements. Frogs can live for 10-20 years of age if cared for correctly.

Enclosures

Frogs can be kept in many different types of terrariums. The three broad categories are:

- Aquatic: Tank bottom covered in water with cage furniture protruding as 'land' areas.
- Semi-aquatic: Bottom of the tank divided by a waterproof barrier with a shall water environment on one side and a dry habitat on the other side
- Terrestrial: Dry or semi-moist substrate on bottom of enclosure, shallow and clean water bowl, refreshed daily

Which type of vivarium is chosen depends on the type of frogs being kept and the time commitment and effort willing to be put in by the owner.

It is important that a frog's enclosure is positioned in a low-traffic area of the household. Regular movement outside of the vivarium can result in significant stress to a frog, which can predispose to disease.

Because frogs do not generate heat internally, they rely on the use of external heat to maintain their bodies at a thermal optimum. Water quality is also very important, as poor water quality can easily lead to disease. These factors make correct husbandry crucial.

Please refer to the handout 'Water quality and the Nitrogen Cycle' and 'Keeping frogs in vivariums' for more information.

Handling

Frogs don't tolerate handling well, they are not pets that should be handled regularly as this will often be excessively stressful for them. Whenever they are handled (e.g. for cage cleaning or trips to the vet) disposable damp gloves should be worn. This is to prevent any chemicals on our skin from being absorbed by their very thin, permeable skin. Frogs must be kept damp at all times and therefore it is best to wet gloves in conditioned water prior to touching them.

Weight

It is beneficial to keep regular records of your frog's weight. Most frogs can be weighed on digital kitchen scales. These should be used specifically for the frog and not in the kitchen. See the *Salmonella and Reptiles* care sheet for more information. If weight loss or a lack of weight gain is noted, then a health check should be arranged.

Health checks

To ensure that your frog is healthy, a health check should be performed by a veterinarian. Regular examinations, once or twice a year, should be performed from then on. This is important because symptoms of disease in frogs 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 highly recommended for all new patients as it assesses the general health of the environment in which your frog 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 frog 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.
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