



AXOLOTL CARE GUIDE





DID YOU KNOW AXOLOTLS CAN LIVE BETWEEN 10-15 YEARS!

Axolotls are native to Mexico and are often referred to as 'Mexican Walking Fish'

Axolotls are amphibians and part of the salamander family.

Axolotls sadly are endangered, with the only remaining population living in Lake Xochimilco, Mexico.

Axolotls unlike other amphibians that undergo metamorphosis from egg to larva then to an adult i.e. tadpole to frog, axolotls remain in their larval form throughout their life, keeping both gills and fins.

Axolotls also have the ability to regrow body parts, such as legs, tail and even parts of their brain or heart, if they are damaged or lost.

Axolotls are fairly hardy creatures and can live for 10 to 15 years. They can also exchange air through their moist skin so they are able to be out of water for short periods so long as their skin remains wet. When in the water, water passes through the gills of the axolotl allowing them to take in oxygen, though from time to time they come to the surface to take a gulp of air.

HOUSING

Axolotls can get quite large, up to 45cm (though most grow to approximately 30cm). Due to their size, a bigger aquarium is better.

For one Axolotls, the aquarium should be no smaller than 45 cm in length, and have a 40L capacity. If you have two Axolotls then this space needs to be doubled and so on.

Note: The length of the tank is more important than the height.

TEMPERATURE

Axolotls are cold water amphibians, and are to be kept in water between 16 - 20 degrees, ideally set your aquarium to 18 degrees.

Note: in Perth it may be necessary to get a chiller to achieve this temperature.

Axolotls do not have scales but skin, which is very sensitive, for this reason it is best not to over handle and not to keep other fish with them. As fish tend to nibble on their gills.



WATER CONDITION

Axolotls are extremely sensitive to poor water conditions, therefore a weekly water change of 20% is required, (using a water conditioner to remove the chlorine) and a stable pH level of 7.4 - 7.6. If changes to pH arise, resulting in increased ammonia levels, axolotls can develop fungal infections easily.

TANK SET UP

Axolotls are known to ingest gravel which can lead to gut problems. It is not necessary to add a substrate to your tank, though some Axolotls have difficulty walking on the glass bottom. If you are adding a substrate, sand or large pebbles. As a guide choose pebbles that are double the size of their adult heads.

Inclusion of plants, rocks, pipes and logs which provide areas in which the axolotls can hide, will provide them with an environment in which they can thrive and will also make your tank interesting to look at. Allowing areas for an Axolotls to hide, also assists with their sensitivity to light, they do not enjoy fast changes in lighting (i.e. dark to light) and prefer dim lighting. A normal aquarium light is generally acceptable.

FILTRATION

Axolotls are adapted to live in still waters. It is important that your filtration system, has a gentle flow back into the tank. Spray arms can assist with this.



FEEDING

Axolotls are carnivores and can eat a variety of different food.

You can feed them sinking axolotl pellets, earthworms or frozen bloodworm cubes and brineshrimp.

Axolotls can be fussy eaters, so you may have to try a variety of different food until you discover what your axolotls prefers. Also they only eat when they are hungry. So do not panick if your axolotls does not eat for a couple of days.

It is also important to feed only a small amount, in small pieces. Remove any food that has not been eaten from the tank to ensure the tank remains clean.

SEXING AXOLOTLS

Axolotls are sexually mature from approximately 12 months, and can be difficult to sex before this time. Males have swollen cloaca, the area under his tail. There will be an obvious bump, where a female does not have this. The tip of the males toes also change colour, but again this can be difficult to see depending on the type and colouring of your axolotls.

Mature males tend to appear more elongated and have longer tails, where mature female are rounder in shape.

BREEDING

Axolotls are a-sexual. The male releases sperm and then leads the female over to them. The sperm enters her body through an opening called a cloaca and they fertilise her eggs. In the next few days she lays hundreds of eggs on leaves of plants or on rocks. It is best to either remove the male and female at this stage, or place the eggs into a different tank.

The eggs need to be kept in well aerated water and will hatch after about two weeks. Within a few days they will need to eat. The food must be live and tiny! Which can be a challenge. If available use newly hatched brineshrimp or microworms.

The young axolotls are about a centimetre long when they hatch and look like frog tadpoles with legs.

As they grow, it's advisable to separate them into their sizes to reduce the risk of cannibalisation.