



Argentine Horned Frog: Life span 7-10 years +

Vital Statistics:

- **Body length:** Males 4-4.5 inches (10-12cm) and females grow up to 6 inches (15cm) long
- **Age at sexual maturity:** 18-24 months
- **Location:** Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil
- **Habitat:** Woodlands, near shallow water as they are very poor swimmers
- **What sex is your frog?** Generally, females will be larger in size than males. Males will call and develop darkened nuptial pads on the inner thighs of the front digits during the breeding season.

What your veterinarian looks for in a healthy frog:

- Bright, alert and responsive attitude
- Eyes open, clear and symmetrical
- Nostrils free of discharge or excessive bubbles
- Head symmetrical with no swellings
- Good leg muscles
- Underbelly should be white to cream colored. Redness may signal disease
- Skin should be smooth, even in texture without wounds present

What to expect from your frog:

Most horned frogs are docile enough to be handled, however, handling should be kept to a minimum. These animals have very sensitive skin and excessive handling can easily damage them. If it is necessary to handle your frog, hands should be clean and free from lotion, medication, perfumes and any other substance that could be absorbed. Moisten hands with distilled, dechlorinated, or bottled water (anything other than tap water) to decrease the risk of tearing skin or leaving residues that can adhere to the skin. These frogs have a very high predatory instinct, which means they will attack anything that moves including your hand. They have teeth and a very strong bite, so use caution when handling your frog.

What should you feed your frog?

Horned frogs have a strong sense of sight and will eat anything that fits in their mouth as well as attempt to eat things that do not fit. In the wild, these frogs are known to eat other amphibians, rodents, insects and small reptiles. For captive adult frogs, earthworms, crickets, superworms, roaches and fuzzy mice can be offered.

- Fuzzy mice are higher in fat so it is recommended these are fed sparingly (1-2 times a month).
- All horned frogs are prone to obesity and this risk increases for those fed diets that include rodents.

How much to feed: Juveniles should be fed every other day, and generally offer what they can eat in 15 minutes (3-4 good sized prey items). Adults should be fed in the same way but only 2-3 times per week. It is not recommended to hand-feed Horned frogs as they have a powerful and painful bite. Place food in a dish or on a flat rock, or feed with forceps.



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Supplements:

Dusting prey items with a calcium supplement should be done twice weekly for growing frogs and weekly for adults. A multivitamin supplement containing Vitamin A should be given weekly to both juveniles and adults.

Water:

Water bowls should be kept shallow to prevent accidental drowning as these frogs are very poor swimmers. The water should be only high enough for the frog to submerge itself. Water should be changed daily. Only use clean, dechlorinated water. NEVER use distilled water as this will cause health problems in frogs.

How to house your frog:

Enclosure:

These frogs should always be housed alone due to their tendency towards cannibalism. A 15-20 gallon (57-76 liter) aquarium or equivalent sized plastic container (Sterilite or Rubbermaid) can be used. Juveniles under 3 inches in length can be maintained in a 5 gallon aquarium or similar sized plastic container.

Recommended substrates include soaked cloth towels or soaked paper towels to prevent buildup of organic debris and to prevent accidental ingestion of substrate. For a more natural looking enclosure, top soil, coconut husk, damp peat moss or sphagnum moss can be used.

- These must be spot cleaned daily and it is recommended to feed in a separate container or offer insects in a dish to avoid accidental ingestion of bedding.
- Avoid using the following substrates: gravel, wood shavings, corn cob material, walnut shells, and cat litter.
- **Cedar wood shavings are toxic to reptiles and should never be used!**

A hide box should be offered to provide a secure place. While commercial hides are available, one can be made by turning a plastic flower pot on its side. Live plants can be easily uprooted by these powerful diggers so should be potted separately if placed in the enclosure. Fake foliage such as silk leaves can be used without problems and these items can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Temperatures:

Daytime temperatures should be between 77-82 degrees F (25-28C). A lamp that emits heat should be placed above one end of the tank to provide a temperature gradient with one side of the tank warmer than the other. Select the wattage of the bulb to provide the proper temperature within the tank. Under-tank heaters may be helpful but should be used with caution as frogs that bury down into the substrate are at risk of being burned.

At night temperatures can drop as low as 72 degrees F (22C). A ceramic heat emitter or red heat emitter bulb may be needed to maintain these temperatures. Do not use a white light at night for heat as this will disrupt the frog's photoperiod. Measure the temperatures in the tank at both ends with thermometers and place them at the level of the substrate (where the frog sits) for more accuracy.



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Humidity:

Humidity (the amount of moisture in the air) is very important to the health of these frogs. Humidity in the enclosure should be maintained around 60-80% and should be measured with a hygrometer.

Frequent misting, moistening the substrate, large water bowls and foggers can be used to maintain these needed high levels of humidity. Mosses are an excellent way to control humidity, but require spot cleaning daily and replacement weekly. The substrate should be wet but not dripping. Clay balls at the bottom of an enclosure covered by particulate substrate will also help to retain moisture.

Lighting requirements:

Horned frogs do not have many lighting requirements. They require a light cycle of 10 hours of light and 14 hours of darkness, this is their natural photoperiod. For better health and behavior ultraviolet (UVB) light is recommended. The output of UVB lights decreases with age, so they should be replaced every six months or as directed by the manufacturer. For UV light to work, it must reach the pet in an unfiltered form, which means that you must make sure there is no glass or plastic between the pet and the light. The light should be within 6-12 inches from the animal in order for the pet to receive any benefit.

Tips for a happy, healthy animal:

- Avoid excessive handling.
- House your frog alone to prevent cannibalism.
- Keep your frog's enclosure clean at all times.
- Maintain proper humidity at all times.
- Do not overfeed to maintain proper body weight and avoid obesity.

Salmonella:

Reptiles naturally carry the bacteria Salmonella naturally on their skin. For this reason, one must thoroughly wash their hands after handling or cleaning a reptile's enclosure and surfaces that may have been in contact with the animal. Children and immunosuppressed individuals should be discouraged from contact with reptiles to minimize risk of infection. Symptoms of Salmonella in people range from diarrhea, fever, stomach pain, vomiting which may require hospitalization. Always wash your hands after handling reptiles.

Schedule of veterinary care:

Annual physical examinations are recommended as frogs are very good at hiding signs of illness. By performing a health check every year, we are able to assess weight, check husbandry conditions and perform testing to help with early disease prevention. Many of the most common diseases in frogs are preventable through good husbandry and nutrition.

Common signs of illness in Argentine Horned Frogs include:

- Lethargy, weakness and decreased appetite
- Changes to the appearance (color and texture) of the skin
- Limb swelling or lameness
- Diarrhea

If you notice any of these signs please have your chameleon assessed by a reptile veterinarian

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