



A mouth with a frog attached.

As the name implies, pacman frogs are named so because of their appearance and behavior. With large mouths and short, stubby legs, their appearance is quite comical. As ambush predators, they will literally eat anything that walks in front of them. Pair that with their large and colorful size and its easy to see why these frogs are a favorite amongst amphibian hobbyists.

Lifespan

Properly cared for, these frogs can live an average lifespan of 10-15 years.

Size

One of the most appealing aspects of owning these frogs is watching them grow to enormous proportions. Depending on the species, females can reach sizes of 4-8 inches and are nearly as wide as they are long. Males are typically smaller at 3-4 inches, but even so, can literally be a handful!

Natural History

“Pacman frog” is the common name often used to describe and one of the many south American horned frogs available in the pet trade. The name is appropriate and is derived from the behavior of these frogs’ feeding and hunting displays. Physically, horned frogs can be described as a giant mouth with a frog attached to it as they will commonly try to eat anything that walks in front of them. All horned frogs are tropical species that can be found on the moist forest floors of Colombia, Argentina, & Venezuela.

Housing

Apart from breeding pairs, it is best to house these voracious, even cannibalistic frogs, individually. Despite their massive adult size, pacman frogs are inactive species and do not require much space. As such, a single adult can be housed in a 10-gallon terrarium. Anything more than a 20-gallon terrarium is unnecessary.

Lighting & Heating

To properly thermoregulate, amphibians must be provided with a healthy temperature gradient as is appropriate for each species. For pacman frogs, these sedentary frogs enjoy warm temperatures and moist conditions.

Provide your frog with temperatures between 75-85F, and never fall below 70F at night. Humidity should fall somewhere around 70%. During most of the year, most people’s homes are suitable for housing pacman frogs. However, the use of small heating pads on the enclosure may be used whenever house temperatures fall below the average range. Measure temperatures and humidity closely with digital thermometers/hygrometers at both warm and cool ends of the enclosure.

These frogs do not need ultraviolet light. However, exposure to appropriate wavelengths of fluorescent lighting can provide a day/night cycle for your frog, encourage healthy growth from any live plants displayed in the enclosure, and display your frog in its best colors. Providing a low output UVB is recommended but is not necessary.

Substrates & Cage Décor

Your frog's setup can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. As a fossorial amphibian, substrate type and depth is essential for these frogs. Provide your frog with a mixed, deep layer of moist, semi loose bedding such as a coconut-fiber base blend with a small amount of sphagnum moss and fine orchid bark. Provide a substrate depth of 4-6 inches for adults and remove feces regularly. The substrate should always be moist but never soggy, so mist often but not too heavy to maintain proper humidity.

Pacman frogs spend a large portion of their time buried beneath the substrate, so while a hide may not seem essential, it is a good idea to provide one. The use of cork bark flats, half logs, or broken terra cotta pots make exceptional hides. Additionally, most artificial plants as well as live plants provide visual barriers and may boost humidity levels in the enclosure.

Offer your frog a large shallow water bowl, changing out the water daily with either dechlorinated tap water or bottled water (never distilled), and disinfected weekly. The use of fresh tap water can introduce heavy metals or chlorine/chloramine to your frog and its environment and is best avoided whenever possible. Contaminants can be present in tap water and harm your frog, and heavy metals can leave unsightly deposits on the glass. If the continued purchase of bottled water is not possible, then dechlorinators can be purchased to use with tap water. Additionally, to maintain proper humidity levels for your frog, mist the enclosure daily using dechlorinated tap water or bottled water as well.

Diet & Nutrition

Pacman frogs are opportunistic carnivores, meaning they'll thrive off a varied diet of appropriately sized and gut loaded crickets, dubia roaches, grasshoppers, mealworms, black soldier larvae, earthworms etc. Superworms, waxworms, or hornworms can be offered as a treat. Provide juveniles with appropriately sized food daily, whatever they will consume in one sitting. Adults may be offered food less frequently; one good meal every couple of days or once a week.

Supplementation ingredients and formulations vary greatly, and there are differing opinions on what works best. The use of a quality calcium w/D3 and multivitamin every other feeding is recommended. Simply dust insects by placing them and dusting powder into a plastic bag or deep tin and shake gently to coat insects with the powder. Food may be dropped into the enclosure, or tong fed (preferred).

Handling & Temperament

It is in the best interest of this animal that they are not handled and are kept as display animals only. Frogs have fragile, permeable skin that should remain moist and is sensitive to germs on our hands. Furthermore, with their ambush lifestyle, pacman frogs can inflict a painful bite with their conical teeth.