



Jungle Bob's Care Sheet Horned Frogs (*Ceratophrys spp.*)

General Information

The huge, colorful Argentine Horned Frog (*Ceratophrys ornata*) is the most popular member of this “charmingly tough” group, but other species appear in the pet trade as well. The care info below can be applied to most of its relatives. With proper care, the Argentine Horned Frog makes a fascinating, relatively low-maintenance pet that may approach 20 years of age.

The Argentine Horned Frog is found in Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil (the map shown here indicates the range of all members of the genus). It dwells in pampas/grassland regions and farm fields, and remains on land except during the breeding season.

Adult females may be wider than their 5 inch snout-vent length; males are 3 ½ to 4 inches long. The legs are quite small, while the head is noticeably large (earning it the popular name of Pac-Man Frog). The upper body is green or brownish-green, and marked with brown, yellow and red blotches. A huge array of “designer” color morphs have been developed by breeders. Adult males also have a thickened area of skin, known as the nuptial pad, on the inside of their thumbs.



Housing

A bare-bottomed 15-20 gallon aquarium, tilted on one side to create a small water section, is ideal for a single adult. Alternatively, a [water bowl](#) can be utilized. Chlorine and chloramine must be removed from your frog's water via liquid preparations designed for that purpose. Horned Frogs feel secure if able to nestle into sheet moss or push below a plastic plant.

Bare-bottomed terrariums or washable cage liners work well for horned frogs. Sphagnum moss or coconut husk may be used, but feeding should then be done via tongs so that substrate ingestion is avoided.

A sub-tank heater under one section of the terrarium is the simplest means of provide a healthful temperature gradient (72-85 F). Horned Frogs do not require UVB light, although low UVB levels, and UVA, may be of some benefit. Daily misting and a water bowl will provide adequate humidity.

Juveniles have insatiable appetites and invariably try to swallow their brethren. Adults may co-exist, but they should be fed separately to avoid bite injuries.

Diet

Whole minnows, shiners, earthworms, roaches, hornworms, and crickets can make up most of your horned frog's diet. A pink mouse may be offered twice monthly, but furred (adult) rodents should be avoided, as their use has been linked to liver problems and fur impactions.

Food (other than pinkies and fish) should be powdered with a Calcium/Vitamin D3 supplement. A multiple [vitamin/mineral supplement](#) may be used 2-3 times weekly. Inadequate calcium and Vitamin D3 intake will result in a crippling and often fatal condition known as Metabolic Bone Disease. Youngsters do best when fed daily or every-other-day, while adults require 2-3 meals per week.

Cleaning and Handling

Ammonia from waste products is extremely lethal, and should be controlled by daily water changes and frequent substrate replacement. The inside of the terrarium can be cleaned out with an appropriate reptile cage cleaner; we recommend [Natural Chemistry's Healthy Habitat](#).

Horned Frog jaws bear tooth-like projections known as odontoid structures. They bite readily in self-defense, and will consider a hand moving in their vicinity as a potential meal. Horned Frogs should be handled only when necessary, and then with wet hands so that the skin's protective mucus is not removed. Amphibian skin secretions may cause irritations when transferred to wounds, eyes, or the mouth. Always wash your hands before and after handling any animal.

Fun Fact

Horned frog tadpoles are carnivorous, yet seem not to prey upon siblings - of which there may be 2,000+! Oddly for a tadpole, they emit distress calls that can be heard both above and below the water.

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Maps courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries.