



AGAVE VETERINARY CARE

AND EXOTIC ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Your complete Axolotl care guide

Introduction

The axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*), also known as the Mexican salamander, is native to both Lake Xochimilco and Lake Chalco. While typically in the wild they are normally gray or shades of brown, there are now a wide variety of morphs including the melanoid (a near black animal), leucistic (white with black eyes), golden albino and white albino, and piebald. Axolotls can live up to 15 years in captivity.

Enclosure

A 10-gallon aquarium tank may suffice an axolotl, but a 20 gallon tank helps maintain better water quality by diluting out nitrogenous waste. The water level should extend to the top of the tank and must be fitted with a lid or aquarium hood at all times. Small aquarium pebbles should not be used as they are commonly ingested.

For safety reasons, young axolotls of about 8 cm (3 inches) should not be kept together in a small space. Young axolotls are particularly prone to fighting and have been known to bite off the legs and gills of others. Adults may tolerate each other more, but axolotls are not social creatures and do not benefit from having a companion.

Do not add fish to an axolotl's tank, and they can potentially nip at their gills.

Water quality is the most important component of caring for your axolotl. A cold tank is required. An ideal tank should have a temperature of 60-65°F, low 70°Fs is tolerable. Temperatures exceeding 74°F cause heat stress, loss of appetite and death. In central Texas, a water chiller will likely be necessary to maintain ideal water temperatures. The water should have slow movement; rapid currents are stressful and traumatic. Water changes need to be performed 1-3X/week (30-50% each time) based on your tank and water quality measurements. Hard water helps maintain the integrity of the skin. Avoid excessively soft or distilled water.

A water quality sheet should stay with your tank to allow you to keep track of water quality changes over time. You should include the date, temperature, pH, ammonia, nitrite, nitrate levels +/- general hardness levels, as well as how much of a water change was performed, if any. Chlorine and chloramines should be used to remove these chemicals from the water.

Ideal values:

Water temperature range: 60-65F

pH 6.5-8 (ideal 7.4-7.6)

Ammonia 0ppm

Nitrite 1ppm

Nitrate <10ppm

GH 7-14 degrees or 124.6-249.2mg/L

Oxygen saturation 70-100%

Salinity 0g/L

Lighting

Axolotls prefer not to be in bright light, and they need adequate places to hide. Avoid placing them in high traffic areas which can cause stress.

Feed

Axolotls require a meat-based diet. When eating, axolotls grip and swallow their food instead of biting or tearing. Nightcrawlers, earthworms, cooked shrimp, blackworms, and sinking salmon pellets can all be used. Feed as much as they can eat in 5-10 minutes and remove any uneaten food items to maintain water quality. Adult axolotls should eat 3-4 times each week, about five 3/16" pellets per feeding.

References

Guide to Axolotl Husbandry - Ambystoma.uky.edu. (2018, July 23). Uky.edu.
<https://ambystoma.uky.edu/education1/guide-to-axolotl-husbandry>

Axolotls: The Fascinating Mexican Axolotl and the Tiger Salamander. (n.d.). [Www.axolotl.org](http://www.axolotl.org). Retrieved September 14, 2023, from <http://www.axolotl.org>