

BIRDS & EXOTICS

**Dr Alex Rosenwax - BVSC MACVSc
(Avian Health)**

Bird & Exotics Veterinarian, Green Square.
Alex graduated from the University of Sydney in 1991. He achieved Membership of the Avian Health Chapter of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists in 1996. In November 1996 he opened the first and only Sydney all bird and exotic pet practice. The Clinic moved to 1 Hunter St, Waterloo in 2003 and sees approximately 80% birds, and 20% fish, reptiles and other exotic pets. Alex is the current President of the Australian Veterinary Association Avian Group.
Shop 3, Block D, 1 Hunter St, Waterloo, Sydney 2017
Ph: (02) 9319 6111 <http://www.birdvet.com.au>



We are considering getting a frog as a pet. We believe we need a licence and have been told it is best to set up an enclosure beforehand. Can you give some advice on how to get ready for our new pet frog.

Frogs are lovely pets and some, like the green tree frog, can live up to 16 years old. They are not difficult to look after once they are settled in to a new home. However, if the housing and set up are not prepared prior to buying your frog, then unfortunately it may suffer from stress and disease. This is the most common reason we see frogs and other amphibians at our clinic. Before acquiring a frog from a licensed breeder, you will need to apply for a licence yourself. If you are an applicant over 16 years of age you can apply for a Native Animal Keepers' Licence. This allows you to keep frogs such as green tree frog, the red-eyed tree frog, dainty tree frog, white-lipped tree frog, peron's tree frog, striped marsh frog and the common froglet. All these varied species of frogs have slightly different environmental requirements. You will need to thoroughly research any frog you intend to own before you bring it home. Below are some general guidelines on how to prepare an enclosure for Australian tree frogs.

Many in-door enclosures are often constructed of glass or perspex. You will need to ensure the lids are secure with no tiny gaps, as frogs are very strong and good at escaping. The size and shape of the enclosure will depend on the age and species of frog you have. It is necessary to have good ventilation. This can be achieved by having a section of the enclosure walls or lid replaced with steel or plastic mesh. However, do not use galvanised wire or rusting mesh as these can be toxic. The enclosure's furniture items and decorations should be made of non-toxic materials and too large for a frog to swallow. Often frogs swallow small items including rocks or leaves and these can cause intestinal obstructions. On the floor, it is best to use gravel or stone substrates. These stones should be smooth, in order to prevent injuries, and large enough not to be swallowed. Frogs like to move around their enclosures so, to prevent injuries, their furniture needs to be very stable and secured to the ground.

It is important to have the correct lighting and heating. Frogs are generally healthier and less likely to develop metabolic bone disease if they have access to unfiltered UV light. Like us, frogs also need to have access to shade as they have very sensitive skin. If UV lights are placed in the enclosure, make sure to only use UV lights recommended for frogs.



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Frogs prefer a stable temperature and are best maintained in an enclosure that has a temperature range of 22oC to 28oC. I recommend using an aquarium heater in the water to help maintain a good temperature range within the enclosure. In colder climates, extra insulation around the outside of the enclosure may also be necessary. We commonly see frogs that are kept outside of this temperature range that have contracted disease and often at lower temperatures will simply not eat.




Frogs absorb water through their skin and it is therefore very important to have the right humidity and clean fresh water in their enclosure. Your frog will often sit in water and "drink" water simply by absorbing it through their skin. So it is necessary for your frog's health to change even filtered water frequently. You will need to treat all enclosure water with a water ager to remove any chlorine. Most frog species like their environment quite humid.

To keep the enclosure humid, use a bubbler or air pump in the water. In larger enclosures you may need fogging devices, a sprinkler or a waterfall to keep the air humid. Fortunately live, non-toxic plants growing in the enclosure also help to keep the enclosure humid. These will not only make the enclosure look great but also improve the humidity. You will need to have a dual thermometer and hygrometer to make sure the temperature and humidity are stable.

Once you have your enclosure in place it will be time to get your new pet frog. Always remember that frogs do not usually show signs of illness until they are very sick. It is important to have your frog checked yearly by your local experienced amphibian veterinarian or whenever you notice any obvious changes in behaviour or signs of illness.

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