



**Captive Bred Specialties*

Horned (Pacman) Frogs *(Ceratophrys ornata)*

Animated Pacmen with an Appetite!

Argentine horned frogs are also widely known as “Pacman” frogs due to their large jaws, rotund heads and bodies, and of course voracious appetites that of course bear resemblance to the popular arcade and video game character. Pacman frogs can easily be identified as large, rotund frogs with large broad heads and jaws. They may vary in color from green, olive, to brownish with warty skin, and with many lighter brown spots and streaks. They also have a pair of prominent “horns” above each eye, which give them their names of horned frogs. These frogs are highly sedentary, ambush predators of nearly any other smaller animals they can capture and ingest, and will often use their powerful but short hind limbs and plump bodies to burrow and conceal themselves in the moist substrate. They also have very strong jaws, and are unique among frogs in that they possess vestigial teeth on their upper jaw as well that can be used to inflict a painful bite if handled carelessly. Despite this, Pacman frogs are easily kept and popular pet frogs.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Suborder: Neobatrachia

Family: Ceratophryidae

Genus: *Ceratophrys*

Species: *Ceratophrys ornata**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, horned frogs can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more in captivity.

Distribution and Habitat

The Argentine horned frog is a unique, terrestrial species of frog indigenous to Argentina and the Pampean region of South America, as well as Uruguay, and into southern Brazil. Other, closely

related horned frog species in the same genus also occur within the Amazonian Basin of Colombia, Ecuador, the Guianas, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil. Within their ranges, these frogs may occupy forest clearings, grasslands, and meadows within and near tropical to sub-tropical, moist rainforests and other forests, ditches, irrigated croplands and agricultural areas, along marshes and swamplands, riverbanks of slow moving rivers and streams, and other temporary to permanent pools or bodies of water. They will use the leaf litter and other vegetation and debris to conceal themselves as well.

Origin/History

Ceratophrys ornata (Bell, 1843).

Argentine horned, or Pacman frogs have been popular frogs in the pet trade for many decades. They would be easy to breed by artificial means, and would be bred in a number of different color and pattern mutations. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the closely related Cranwell's horned frog began to gain popularity. A slightly smaller species at 3 to 4 inches, and typically drabber brown in appearance, initially it was largely ignored by the trade. The introduction of its albino form by Kim Thomas in 1992, however, caused Cranwell's horned frog to really take off, and by the mid-1990s, both species were firm favorites of hobbyists. *C. ornata* was the first commercially bred frog species to be offered in the pet trade!

With the albino's bright yellow coloration, it would become easy to see how these near-round frogs with a penchant for eating anything and everything put in front of them got them the name "Pac-Man" frog from the popular Video game character, though the name is now used collectively in reference to all horned frog *Ceratophrys* spp (Andrew Tillson-Willis 2017).

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Argentine horned, or Pacman frogs can be fairly large frogs, typically reaching up to 4 to 8 inches as adults.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Moist-Terrestrial to Semi-Fossorial. Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. Pacman frogs are not overly active frogs and can be kept in a 10 to 15 gallon aquarium with a secured top or lid. Use an absorbent, naturalistic substrate that enables the frog to burrow such as cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, or coconut husk fiber substrates, all of which can work well. Dampened paper towel can also be used as a less naturalistic and aesthetically pleasing substrate. Provide a large, but shallow water pan within the enclosure at all times that these frogs can readily enter and exit from, and be sure to clean and change it 2 to 3 times weekly or whenever fouled. Also be sure to mist daily to help maintain humidity and hydration that these frogs need as well.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Argentine horned frogs have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it in moderated amounts can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). These frogs are also fairly hardy when it comes to their temperatures, and can be kept within 75 to 85 degrees F. Create a

thermal temperature gradient within their enclosure, and a 12 to 14 hour light cycle can also be provided. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. These sedentary frogs can typically be maintained at humidity levels of at or around 50 to 70%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous to Carnivorous; Horned, or Pacman frogs can be voracious predators in the wild, and will feed on a variety of insects, arachnids, worms, and other invertebrates. They may also occasionally catch and consume smaller vertebrates as well. These frogs in captivity should be fed 2 to 3 times weekly. They are very sight oriented feeders, and will eat feeder crickets, roaches, earthworms, redworms, bloodworms, or mealworms as well as feeder fish and occasionally pre-killed rodents of appropriate size, although these prey items should be given only sparingly. They can also be given many commercially available pelleted diets, or freeze dried foods, but these must be animated. Do not overfeed these frogs, or obesity and other health issues can become concerns. Feeder insects should be gut loaded by provided them a quality diet containing vitamins and minerals. Gutloading and dusting insects with vitamin D3 and calcium supplements 1 to 2 times weekly for added nutritional value will greatly benefit the health and well-being of these frogs. Feed them using tongs, forceps, or otherwise in the enclosure or in a dish and not by hand, as they can become acclimated enough to mistake a moving hand or finger as food during feeding. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

Handling

Pacman frogs are soft skinned amphibians with permeable skin and should avoid being handled if it is not necessary. These frogs can be aggressive and inflict a painful bite to a careless finger. All amphibians breathe and respire through their skin, as well as absorb water through this means. It is therefore important to avoid wearing any chemicals or lotions on your hands, which can be potentially harmful or even fatal to amphibians. It is also important to wash or rinse hands thoroughly, and ensure they are adequately moistened before and after handling any amphibians in order to prevent them from drying out.

****Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens****

Contact

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

Eric.S.Roscoe@gmail.com

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. We cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety.

*Copyright, 2023