

A Guide to raising Frogs and Tadpoles

FROGS are amphibians. They have webbed feet, and are remarkable for their rapid swimming and leaping.

Australia has a ‘national sport’ of removing toads from our environment using their vehicles. Please be aware that many frogs sit on the road after rain, as well as toads. Frogs tend to sit ‘flat’ rather than raised up with their head in the air. Frogs also leap rather than jump – the legs do not seem to be going in the same direction at one time.

Many people make the mistake that all frogs live in water – frogs need access to water, but prefer to live in damp, dark places i.e. between bricks and wall cavities, in pipes and drains.

Frogs should only be picked up when your hands are wet and clean. The correct method for holding a frog is in the palm of your hand, with your fingers and thumb curled slightly towards it. If the frog is active, you may have to curl your fingers a little closer, or place your other hand over the top.

Injured frogs can be transported in a damp or wet pillowcase, or sitting on a damp towel in a box or cage. Emergency housing for frogs can be either a plastic container with a ventilated lid, an ice cream container with holes punched in the lid or glass aquariums. Their preferred temperature for housing is between 15 and 20 degrees

Frogs prefer a live diet. Insects such as crickets, mealworms and fruit flies are suitable.

Frogs can become dehydrated. Their eyes become dull and sunken, and their skin looks dull and dried. They become lethargic as well. Frogs found in houses and buildings on the floor often look like this. To re-hydrate a frog, place it gently in a shallow bowl of water. Frogs should have a good covering of muscle over their spine.

Some basic rules for raising Tadpoles

Please note that frogs and tadpoles should not be moved from their own area. Moving them encourages the spread of disease if any is present.

Frogs often lay their eggs in puddles after rain, and with the hot sun beating down, puddles have a tendency to dry up. Eggs or tadpoles then lose their water source, and we unfortunately lose more frogs from our eco system. If the puddles are in your garden or your street, it should be acceptable for you to give them a helping hand.

CONTAINERS

The best container for raising tadpoles is one that is short on height but wide in the base. This allows more oxygen concentration in the water. It may be made of glass, foam or plastic, but **NO METAL**. Children’s plastic shell wading pools are ideal for raising tadpoles in.

If you do not have many tadpoles and are using a smaller container, sand is a good choice for the bottom, but must be washed many, many times to remove any salt. Small fish tank pebbles will also do fine.

WATER

Rule one – it must be clean – tap water is not suitable as it has chemicals in it. Try to get water from the place where you gathered the tadpoles.

Rule two – the water must be salt free – water from tidal rivers must be purified.

Rule three – rain water is the best to use – no salt, no chemicals.

Rule four – if you cannot get any of the above, then fill a bucket with water from the tap and leave it outside in the sun to purify for 5 – 7 days. This removes the chemicals. It is sensible to have a couple of buckets of water ‘on the go’ at the same time.

OXYGEN

Oxygen is important for tadpoles and subsequent metamorphs – their living environment must be kept clean. If the water is dirty or fouled, the tadpoles will die. If you are using a fish tank, then an air pump can be used. If you are using wading pools, set up two, so that the tadpoles can be transferred into a clean pool every few days and the old pool cleaned out.

FOOD

Tadpoles eat a lot. In fact, their entire life is defined by eating, looking for food, and eating! Greens like lettuce and spinach can be boiled and then mashed. You can freeze this mush in cubes and store in an ice cream container, and defrost it when needed. Tadpoles do not have teeth, they ‘gum’ everything.

They can also be fed on a good quality fish food – flakes. You can combine the two and feed them a different food on alternate days. Do not overfeed as this just dirties up the water.

METAMORPHOSIS

This is when your sweet little tadpoles begin to grow their legs. The back legs grow first, then the front legs. At this point, the tadpoles no longer like the water, and will drown if they are not given obstacles or rocks to climb on out of the water. Once the legs are well enough developed they can be placed in a garden for release.

TADPOLE OR TOADPOLE?

As a general rule, frogs lay their eggs in a ‘bunch’ whilst toads lay their eggs in a ‘string’. Frogs will lay their eggs in puddles, whilst toads prefer a permanent water source for laying.

Tadpoles look more oval in shape and their belly is white, cream or clear. Toad-poles are more triangular in appearance, and their belly is usually black or mottled.

Ornate burrowing frogs are often mistaken for toads. Their bodies are rounder and softer in feel than that of a toad. They like to burrow in soft sand or soil. Ornate burrowing frogs have a ‘butterfly’ pattern in the centre of their back – this helps to define them from a toad.

This is a rough guide to raising tadpoles only. There are many good website and reference books on raising tadpoles. This information is written from experience of raising tadpoles (many of them!) and of gathering and collating information over many years.

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