

AQUATIC SOLUTIONS – AXOLOTL CARE SHEET



HISTORY: Also known as the Mexican walking fish, the word axolotl comes from the Aztec which is thought to mean “water doll”. Known scientifically as *Ambystoma Mexicana*, axolotls are, in fact, the larval stage of the salamander, air breathing, land dwelling, lizard-like amphibian. Axolotl pets usually remain in this larval stage indefinitely.

APPEARANCE: Axolotl’s appear in four predominate colours, black, white, gold and olive. They have a tadpole-like appearance with a long tail. A fin runs from the back of the head to the tail and along the underside of the tail. They have four lizard-like legs and a pair of feathery gills adorns the head.

Females can be recognised by their large, wider head and plumper body while males have testis between their rear legs. A large axolotl can grow to about 30cm and can weigh up to 300 grams. They have poor eyesight with no eye lids and are quite sensitive to light, so remember to house them away from direct sunlight or bright aquarium lights.

Interestingly, axolotls are able to regenerate lost body parts over time. A trait which come in handy, considering their habit of nipping off each off each other’s limbs, if they get too close.

TEMPERAMENT: Although very placid if left alone, axolotls can be aggressive towards each other if agitated, underfed or overcrowded. Other tank inhabitants, such as goldfish, small crustaceans and young axolotls are all potential food should they wander too close. Axolotls will snap out at anything within reach and fish may also nip at the axolotl’s gills, so it is recommended not to keep other tank mates of a different species. Although snappy, axolotls do not have sufficient size teeth to cause their owners any harm. It is also very import not handle you axolotl out of the water. They are strictly aquatic; a point which should be made clear to small children. Axolotls are quite happy to live a solitary existence.

FEEDING: It is best to feed a small amount daily, although adults can survive on feeding once to three times a week if provided a proper diet. Water temperature also plays an import role on feeding demands. Below 14 degrees C and the axolotl will need additional feedings as metabolism speeds up, not actually slowing down as with many other species. Preferred foods are earthworms, insects, small fish, crustaceans and tadpoles. Our axolotls have been transitioned to pellets and blood worms and love it. If feeding live insects, ensure that they have not been exposed to chemical poisons. Any uneaten food should be removed from the tank within 24 hours.



HEALTH AND LIFESPAN: If handled too often, stressed or injured, axolotls may suffer fungal or bacterial infections due to damage of the slime-coat which covers their skin. These conditions can be treated with varying success with medications available from pet shops.

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Water temperature should remain fairly constant without getting too warm, as this may also promote fungal growth. The ideal range is 14-18 degrees C. Axolotls may need occasional worming, but only if they appear affected. A best indicator of this is white and watery faeces. Healthy, well-kept axolotls will average 12-15 years but there have been reports of even living as long as 25 years.



HOUSING AND MAINTENANCE: If housing a single axolotl, a 60cm long tank is recommended. The minimum recommended size for a pair is 60-90cm. Smaller tanks or circular bowls will cause the axolotl to pace, encouraging the swim bladder to develop to one side which can harm them. Plants should also be added as axolotls like to sleep and rest into the safety of the foliage. If adding gravel, ensure it is large enough to not be swallowed when they are feeding/ large river pebbles are ideal.

As with all tanks, good quality filtration is required, and pH and water parameters should be checked on a regular basis. Once set up correctly, the axolotl and its tanks are low maintenance and make a great feature at home and are an ideal candidate for newcomers to fish keeping.



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