

Pacman Frog (*Ceratophrys ornata*)

Difficulty: Easy



Pacman frogs (*Ceratophrys ornata*) are medium-sized, terrestrial amphibians found in parts of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. These frogs prefer moist grasslands for habitat, and spend most of their lives partially buried.

Pacman frogs generally grow 4-6" long, with males being smaller than females. They have bumpy skin, round pupils, hornlike ridges over their eyes, and generally look like a big mouth with eyes and legs. They have a fairly typical military camouflage-like pattern, made up of any combination of white, yellow, orange, brown, green, and/or black. However, captive breeding efforts have made other color varieties ("morphs") available.

With good care, a pet pacman frog can live up to 10 years. Due to their above-average hardiness, Pacman frogs can make a good choice for first-time frog owners.

What You Need for a Bioactive Pacman Frog Enclosure

- Front-opening 24" x 18" x 18" glass terrarium
- [40w Exo Terra Daytime Heat Lamp](#)
- [Zoo Med Naturalistic Terrarium Hood, 12"](#)
- Plug-in lamp dimmer
- [Arcadia ShadeDweller UVB ProT5 Kit](#)
- [Bio Dude Solar Grow T5 HO Single Bulb Light Strip, 12"](#)
- [Zilla 24/7 Digital Timer Power Center](#)

- [Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer](#), x2
- [Exo Terra 2qt Mister](#)
- [Terra Fauna Bioactive Kit, 24 x 18 x 18/24](#)
- [White's Tree Frog Clean Up Crew Pack](#)
- [4" Pot Large Tropicals 3-Pack](#)
- [Fluker's Natural Rock Water Dish - Large](#)
- [Zoo Med Reptisafe](#)
- Repashy Calcium Plus LoD

Terrarium Size

The minimum enclosure size we recommend for housing a single pacman frog is **24”L x 18”W x 18”H**. Pacman frogs should always be housed alone, as they are known to eat other frogs in their space.

Lighting

Pacman frogs are capable of surviving without UVB lighting as long as they get enough dietary vitamin D3, but relying on supplements alone is not optimal. Aside from enabling vitamin D3 synthesis, access to UVB lighting is likely to offer other benefits such as preventing illness, improving nervous and digestive function, and improving mental health.

In other words, we recommend installing appropriate UVB lighting as part of your frog’s setup. Setting up one **Arcadia ShadeDweller UVB ProT5 Kit** is likely to work the best for an 24”x18”x18” enclosure. The frog should be able to get no closer than 10” below the lamp.

Your UVB bulb must be replaced every 12 months to maintain its output. Resist the temptation to use other brands — when it comes to UVB, *brand matters!*

Because this is a bioactive setup, you will also need a plant light to encourage healthy plant growth. The extra illumination is also beneficial for further simulating sunlight! We recommend the **12” Bio Dude Solar Grow T5 HO Single Bulb Light Strip** for this purpose.

Both lighting and heating should be on for 12 hours/day, or synchronized with your local sunrise/sunset times.

Heating

Like other amphibians, pacman frogs are *ectotherms*, and that means that the temperature of their environment determines their body temperature. In your enclosure, it’s best to provide a gradient of temperatures within a certain range that is appropriate for pacman frogs. Too hot will cause them to suffer from heat stress (and potentially death!). Too cold will cause them to lose their appetite and energy, and may cause them to get sick.

Pacman frog temperature gradient:

- **Basking zone temperature:** 82-85°F
- **General air temperature:** 75-80°F
- **Nighttime temperature:** 65-70°F

To create a basking zone for your pacman frog, you will need a low-wattage white heat bulb like the **25w Exo Terra Daytime Heat Lamp** and a horizontal fixture like the **12" Zoo Med Naturalistic Hood**. If the basking zone gets too warm, you can plug the lamp into a lamp dimmer like the **Lutron Credenza** and reduce the heat that way. If the basking area is too cool, you will need a higher-wattage bulb.

The most accurate way to keep track of your terrarium's temperatures is to use a digital probe thermometer like the **Bio Dude Digital Thermometer / Hygrometer**. Place one probe on the basking spot to gauge the basking temperature. You should also place another probe in a shaded area in the middle of the enclosure to track general air temperature.

Humidity

Pacman frogs need a moderate humidity environment. To be specific, they need an **average of 60-80% humidity**, with higher levels at night. Keep track of your humidity levels with the same devices and placements mentioned in the previous section.

To raise humidity in your frog's enclosure and provide a source of drinking water, use an **Exo Terra 2qt Mister** to wet things down every evening, preferably when it's dark. If you need help increasing humidity, you can run a fogger/cool mist humidifier at night, regulated by a humidistat.

Substrate

A thick layer of bioactive-compatible substrate is essential to creating a successful bioactive pacman frog enclosure.

First, pour approximately 2" of clay balls or **Bio Dude HydroGrow** drainage material on the bottom of the enclosure. Then, place a layer of **tight mesh** on top to help prevent soil from getting into the drainage layer.

Next you will need a soil-like mix that mimics the conditions of a moist grassland and will nourish your plants. If you want to make your own, you will need a mixture of 50% organic topsoil, 25% peat moss or coconut fiber, and 25% play sand. Mix that with leaf litter, sphagnum moss, and an appropriate amount of **Bio Shot** to inoculate your soil with beneficial microfauna. This layer of soil should be as deep as possible.

Alternatively, you can let The Bio Dude do the work for you with **The Bio Dude's Terra Fauna 24 x 18 x 18 bioactive substrate kit**.

To make the substrate functional, make sure to add tropical CUC organisms like powder blue/orange isopods, dwarf isopods, and arid springtails. Larger CUC critters are more likely to get eaten by your frog.

For best results, let your plants and CUC get established for at least one month before introducing your frog to the setup. This is also a good time to make sure you have the right temperatures and humidity.

Decorating the Enclosure

Enclosure décor is more than just making your setup look good. It's also an important part of providing *environmental enrichment* to your frog, which enhances your pet's quality of life by providing

opportunities to express natural behaviors. Considering that pacman frogs are terrestrial, you will need primarily **leaf litter** and **foliage** to give them places to hide and different textures to experience.

Live plants in particular are critical to helping your mini-ecosystem function properly! However, be aware that pacman frogs are fairly heavy-bodied, so make sure to use sturdier varieties of plants.

Feeding Your Pacman Frog

Pacman frogs are *carnivorous*, which means that they eat other animals – both vertebrates and invertebrates. In the wild they eat mice, small reptiles, spiders, and insects such as locusts. Here is a quick feeding schedule you can reference:

- Juveniles — 2-3x/week
- Adults — 1x/week

For both age groups, the frog should be offered roughly as many insects as it is capable of eating within a 5-minute period. If it's starting to look overweight, reduce the number of insects per meal. Each insect should be at least slightly smaller than your frog's head. You can let the insects loose inside the enclosure for your frog to chase down, or you can offer them in a wall-mounted feeding dish.

The key to providing a healthy, balanced diet for any exotic animal is VARIETY! Here's a quick list of feeders that are good for pacman frogs:

- crickets
- dubia roaches
- discoid roaches
- earthworms
- hornworms
- silkworms
- superworms

Appropriately-sized mice can be offered as occasional treats.

Supplements

Although feeder insects should be gutloaded for 24-48 hours prior to feeding, they will also need to be "dusted" with an appropriate supplement powder just before. There are many options, but the **Arcadia Earthpro supplement system** and **Repashy Calcium Plus LoD** are both solid calcium supplements with a small amount of vitamin D3 to keep your frog's reserves topped off. For best results, use as directed by the label.

Drinking Water

Pacman frogs should have access to a bowl of water large enough for them to soak their entire body, but shallow enough there is no risk of drowning. Treat the water with **Zoo Med ReptiSafe** water condition to remove chlorine and chloramines. Keep the water clean at all times and scrub the bowl weekly with a veterinary-grade disinfectant for good hygiene.

Care information courtesy of ReptiFiles.