

## Green Tree Frog Care

### Vital Statistics

Life expectancy	15 - 20 years	Adult body size	6 – 10 cm
Sexual maturity	8 – 12 months	Life cycle	amphibious

Green tree frogs, *Litoria caerulea*, are one of Australia's best known frogs. They are found throughout Australia, except in the colder south and in the arid west. They make good amphibian pets as they generally tolerate small amounts of handling and are very well adjusted to living in confined spaces. Green tree frogs are also relatively easy to maintain once their specific environmental conditions are met. Below are the basic requirements for keeping green tree frogs as pets. Please note. All Australian Frogs are protected species in Australia. Seek individual state & territory requirements for legalities on keeping frogs as pets

### Enclosure

Green tree frogs can be adequately housed in an indoor tank set up. Their amphibious nature means that they require the provision of water of good quality to maintain healthy skin, which is critical for maintaining fluid balance and enable gas exchange

- \* A standard 90cm tank enclosure can adequately house 3 – 4 adult frogs. Ensure the tank is escape-proof
- \* In nature, green tree frogs are typically found in the undergrowth near a still water source. The substrate (layer of material on the bottom on the tank) can consist of plain, flat rocks/pebbles overlaid by moist sheet moss. Ensure rocks/pebbles are large enough that they can't be swallowed
- \* Branches, both horizontal and vertical, provide elevated perches
- \* Artificial plants, with broad leaves should be used to fill some of the open space in the enclosure. These provide cover and rest spots and act to filter overhead lighting to create the more subdued lighting at ground level that green tree frogs prefer
- \* Appropriate hiding spots should be provided at areas of the enclosure. These can be fashioned from small upturned dark coloured plastic containers, with an access hole cut into the wall. Hiding spots should be deep enough to enable your frog to fully hide its body inside
- \* A shallow water source should be present at ground level. A waterfall or some other form of water movement can also be added to increase evaporation and help maintain temperature and humidity of the environment

### Heating/lighting

- \* Green tree frogs require a temperature gradient in their enclosure. This means they need a 'warm' and a 'cool' end. A maximum and minimum thermometer should be maintained at the warmest and coolest points at all times to ensure that the daily temperature range is appropriate
- \* The tolerated temperature range for green tree frogs is generally accepted to be between 18 – 32°C. This can be accomplished via a combination of overhead spot lights, low wattage undertank heat mats, and/or heating the water with an aquarium heater. The water can be heated to between 24 – 26°C and this alone may be sufficient to provide warmth to the remainder of the tank. Never use heat rocks, as serious thermal injuries can occur
- \* Care must be taken to ensure that any heat generating light sources do not overly dry the air. It is also important that the frogs can not come into direct contact with any heat sources
- \* Although green tree frogs are largely nocturnal, it has been demonstrated a lack of UVB lighting in captivity results in stunted and deformed growth. UVB 2.0 lighting is generally sufficient. The effective UVB emission lifespan of these lights is @ 3 – 6 months, therefore replacement every 6 months
- \* Natural unfiltered sunlight has been shown to be important for normal behavior and physiology in frogs. Green tree frogs benefit from exposure to unfiltered sunlight 20 – 30 minutes several times a week. When doing this ensure the frogs are enclosed safely in an escape proof/predatory proof container with shallow water and a hide. The sunlight should not pass through any glass or plastic as this will filter out UVB radiation. Make certain that the frogs cannot overheat

### Water and humidity

- \* Water quality is an important consideration as all amphibians, including green tree frogs, have permeable skin. There are therefore more sensitive to dirty and contaminated water.
- \* Water should be changed regularly and the water dish washed out. Alternatively, a water source may be maintained via continual filtration. Water quality should also be monitored regularly. Tests should include water pH (acidity), temperature, ammonia, nitrates and nitrites. Elevated levels of ammonia, nitrates and nitrites, which are the by-products of excretion may indicate that more frequent water changes are required
- \* The local tap water supply in Sydney is suitable for green tree frogs, and only requires the removal of chlorine before it can be used. This can be achieved by 'ageing' the water by leaving it in the sun for a day or two, or by using a good water conditioner that will remove any harmful chemicals
- \* The humidity inside the enclosure should imitate that of a green tree frog's natural habitat. Humidity is generally controlled by adjusting the amount of ventilation, and by varying the amount of water that is added to the enclosure and released into the air. Spraying the enclosure several times daily can be used to increase humidity, but the effect is only temporary. Instilling a waterfall or putting an airstone in the water bowl will create areas of moving water and thus increase humidity.

### Feeding

- \* In the wild, green tree frogs are almost totally insectivorous. Offer green tree frogs a variety of insects such as crickets, roaches and moths
- \* Insects should be gut-loaded (fed) and dusted with calcium/multivitamin powder just before being offered
- \* Adults should be offered around 10 – 20% of their own body size in food spread out over 2 – 3 feeds each week. Juveniles should be fed 2 – 3 times daily. Any food not eaten in 10 – 20 minutes should be removed from the tank

### Veterinary & Health Notes

- \* Have any new frog examined by a reptile & amphibian vet. Parasite checks and general blood screens can be performed if deemed necessary
- \* It is essential that you quarantine any newly acquired frog. Don't risk introducing any disease or parasites. Speak to your reptile & amphibian vet for details on sound quarantine procedures
- \* It is recommended that you have your frogs vet-checked annually
- \* Always wear gently wetted gloves when handling any amphibians. Always wash your hands after handling and between handling any amphibians
- \* It is a good idea to regularly weigh and record the body weight of your frogs, as it is often weight loss that is the first sign of disease
- \* Frogs can be transported individually in small plastic containers (with air holes) with a moistened substrate such as a wet, unbleached paper towel