**YVCipedia AMPHIBIAN**

Newt Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

Newts are aquatic or semi-aquatic amphibians, commonly kept as pets due to their manageable size and fascinating behavior. They are part of the salamander family and are distinguished by their rougher skin and more aquatic lifestyles. Most pet newts live 10–20 years and thrive in cool, clean, and well-maintained environments.

Species such as the **Eastern newt**, **Japanese fire belly newt**, and **Chinese fire belly newt** are popular in the pet trade. Newts should never be housed with tropical fish or aggressive tankmates, and handling should be minimized to avoid damaging their sensitive, permeable skin.

## **Housing & Environment**

Newts do best in aquatic or semi-aquatic setups that allow for swimming, resting, and hiding. The enclosure type depends on the species—some require more land, others more water.

**Aquatic/Semi-aquatic Tank Setup:**

* **Size:** Minimum 10 gallons for one or two newts; larger is better
* **Water depth:** 4–8 inches depending on species
* **Land area:** Floating platforms or sloped land for semi-aquatic species
* **Lid:** Secure, as newts are escape artists
* **Hides:** PVC pipes, cork bark, plants (real or artificial)

**Substrate:**

* Bare-bottom, smooth gravel, or large river stones
* Avoid sharp or small gravel that may be ingested

**Filtration & Water Quality:**

* Low-flow filtration to maintain clean water
* Regular partial water changes (25–30% weekly)
* Use dechlorinated or conditioned water only
* Maintain stable parameters:
  + **pH:** 6.5–7.5
  + **Ammonia/Nitrites:** 0
  + **Temperature:** 60–72°F (species dependent—most prefer cooler temps)

## **Heating, Lighting & Humidity**

Newts thrive at cooler temperatures than many tropical pets and generally **do not require added heating**.

**Temperature:**

* **Ideal range:** 60–72°F
* Keep tanks out of direct sunlight or heat sources to avoid overheating
* Species from warmer regions (e.g., *Cynops* spp.) tolerate up to 75°F

**Lighting:**

* UVB lighting is not essential but may benefit health and behavior
* Use a day/night cycle: 10–12 hours of light per day
* Avoid bright, intense lighting—newts prefer shaded, dim environments

**Humidity (if land area present):**

* Maintain 60–80% in terrestrial sections
* Mist lightly as needed

## **Diet & Nutrition**

Newts are carnivorous and feed on small live or frozen prey. Diet variety ensures proper nutrition.

**Diet staples:**

* Bloodworms (frozen or live)
* Blackworms
* Brine shrimp
* Daphnia
* Chopped earthworms
* Occasionally: High-quality, soft-bodied amphibian pellets

Feed 3–4 times per week, offering what they will consume within 15–20 minutes. Use feeding tongs or place food in a shallow dish for easier monitoring. Remove uneaten food promptly to maintain water quality.

## **Health & Veterinary Care**

Newts are generally hardy but can develop health issues if housed in poor water conditions or with improper diets.

**Common Issues:**

* **Skin infections or ulcers** (often from poor water quality)
* **Bloating** or fluid retention
* **Fungal infections** (white fuzzy patches)
* **Parasites** (seen with wild-caught individuals)
* **Ammonia burns** (from dirty water)

**Signs of illness:**

* Lethargy or floating listlessly
* Loss of appetite
* Difficulty swimming
* Skin discoloration or lesions

**Care Tips:**

* Annual wellness checks with an exotic vet
* Quarantine new animals before introducing them to an established tank
* Avoid touching your newt unless necessary—wear gloves and rinse hands thoroughly

## **Behavior & Handling**

Newts are shy and slow-moving, spending most of their time hiding or exploring their tank environment. They may become more active at feeding times or in dim light.

**Handling should be avoided.** Their skin is highly sensitive and can absorb harmful substances, including oils, soaps, or lotions from human hands. If handling is necessary (e.g., for cleaning or veterinary exams), wear powder-free gloves and return them to water immediately after.

## **Enrichment & Tank Design**

A stimulating tank setup mimics the newt’s natural environment and encourages exploration.

**Enrichment options:**

* Varied terrain (rocks, driftwood, sloped platforms)
* Live aquatic plants (Java moss, anubias)
* Rearranged tank décor occasionally
* Multiple hideouts to reduce stress

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Newts go through an aquatic larval stage, followed by a juvenile terrestrial phase (called “eft” in species like the Eastern newt), before returning to a mostly aquatic adult life
* Some species can regenerate lost limbs and tails
* Fire belly newts produce mild skin toxins—never house with other pets
* Clean, cool water is the most important aspect of newt care
* Never mix newt species or house with fish that nip or compete for food

## **Supplies Checklist**

* 10+ gallon aquarium with secure lid
* Water conditioner
* Low-flow filter
* Aquarium-safe heater (only if species needs warmer temps)
* Floating platforms or land area
* Substrate (smooth gravel, river stones, or bare bottom)
* Aquatic and hiding décor
* Frozen/live food variety
* Feeding tongs
* Water test kit (ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH)
* Thermometer
* Amphibian-safe cleaning supplies

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*