## **YVCipedia AMPHIBIANS**

Tomato Frog Care Sheet

## **Species Overview**

**Tomato Frogs (*Dyscophus* spp.)** are **terrestrial, burrowing amphibians** native to Madagascar. They’re named for their **vivid reddish-orange coloration**, resembling a ripe tomato—a natural warning to predators about their mild skin toxins.

Tomato Frogs are **stocky, ground-dwelling, and relatively sedentary**. They’re popular for their **striking color**, ease of housing, and **hardiness** compared to many amphibians, making them a reasonable choice for keepers ready to maintain **humid, stable conditions**.

Adult females are larger and more brightly colored, reaching **3.5–4 inches**, while males stay smaller at **2–2.5 inches**. Lifespan averages **6–10 years**, with good care.

## **Housing & Environment**

Tomato Frogs are **terrestrial burrowers** that need **floor space and depth for digging**, plus **secure humidity**.

**Minimum enclosure size:**

* Single adult: 10–20 gallon long tank
* Pairs or small groups: 20–30 gallons or larger
* Floor space is more important than height

**Key enclosure features:**

* Secure lid (they can push up surprisingly well)
* Deep, diggable substrate (3–4+ inches)
* Moist hides or burrow areas
* Smooth décor without sharp edges to prevent skin injuries

**Recommended substrates:**

* Coconut fiber (eco earth)
* Organic, pesticide-free topsoil
* Sphagnum moss in hides for added humidity
* Avoid gravel or bark chips (risk of impaction if swallowed)

**Cleaning guidelines:**

* Spot-clean feces and uneaten prey daily
* Fully replace substrate and disinfect the enclosure every 4–6 weeks

## **Heating & Lighting**

Tomato Frogs do well in **warm, stable, tropical conditions** without excessive heat.

**Temperature range:**

* **Daytime:** 72–80°F
* **Nighttime:** Can drop safely to ~65–72°F
* Avoid sustained temperatures above 82–84°F

**Heating:**

* Usually room temperature is sufficient for many homes
* Ceramic heat emitter or side-mounted heat mat (thermostat-controlled) if needed
* Avoid direct heat rocks (burn risk)

**Lighting:**

* No intense lighting required—they’re **crepuscular/nocturnal**
* **Low-level UVB (2–5%) is optional but beneficial** for calcium metabolism and health
* Maintain a **12-hour light/dark cycle** with timers to simulate natural day length

## **Humidity**

Tomato Frogs require **moderate to high humidity** in the **60–80%** range.

**Humidity management tips:**

* Light misting once or twice daily to maintain humidity
* Provide a moist hide with damp sphagnum moss
* Live plants help retain humidity naturally
* Use **digital hygrometers** for accurate monitoring
* Ensure ventilation to prevent mold or bacterial overgrowth

Proper humidity is **essential** for healthy skin and successful shedding.

## **Water & Hydration**

Tomato Frogs **absorb water through their skin**, making **clean, dechlorinated water** critical.

**Water guidelines:**

* Provide a **shallow water dish** large enough for soaking
* Change water daily to avoid bacterial contamination
* Always use **dechlorinated or treated water**
* Mist daily to maintain hydration and encourage natural drinking behavior

## **Diet & Feeding**

Tomato Frogs are **insectivorous ambush predators** that rely on live prey.

**Feeding guidelines:**

* Juveniles: Feed **daily or every other day**
* Adults: Feed **every 2–3 days**

**Appropriate prey items:**

* Gut-loaded crickets
* Dubia roaches
* Black soldier fly larvae
* Earthworms (pesticide-free)
* Occasional waxworms or superworms (treat only—high fat)

**Feeding tips:**

* Prey should be **appropriately sized** (no larger than the width of the frog’s mouth)
* Use **feeding tongs** to reduce risk of substrate ingestion
* Dust insects with **calcium (with D3) 2–3× weekly**
* Add a **multivitamin supplement 1× weekly**
* Remove uneaten prey to maintain enclosure hygiene

## **Behavior & Handling**

Tomato Frogs are **generally sedentary, shy, and stress-prone with handling**. They will often **inflate their bodies and secrete a sticky, mild toxin** when threatened.

**Handling recommendations:**

* Minimal handling is best—they are **display animals**
* Always **wet hands with dechlorinated water** before contact
* Support the body gently, avoiding squeezing
* Wash hands thoroughly after contact to remove mild skin toxins

Frequent handling **is not recommended**, as it can stress the frog and damage delicate skin.

## **Healthcare & Veterinary Care**

Plan for an **initial veterinary exam** after acquisition and **annual wellness checkups** with an exotics-savvy veterinarian.

**Common health issues:**

* Skin infections from poor hygiene or low humidity
* Shedding problems (dysecdysis)
* Impaction (from substrate ingestion with prey)
* Parasites (especially in wild-caught specimens)
* Nutritional metabolic bone disease (from inadequate supplementation)

**Warning signs:**

* Lethargy or unresponsiveness
* Persistent refusal to eat
* Abnormal skin color or lesions
* Difficulty shedding
* Bloating or open-mouth breathing

Prompt veterinary care helps **prevent serious complications** and supports **long-term health**.

## **Enrichment & Habitat Design**

Tomato Frogs **benefit from secure, naturalistic enclosures** that support **burrowing and hiding**.

**Enrichment strategies:**

* Deep, moist substrate for burrowing
* Humid hides with damp sphagnum moss
* Smooth décor with natural textures (no sharp edges)
* Leaf litter or plants for visual cover
* Occasional rearrangement to encourage exploration

A well-designed habitat supports **natural behaviors** and **reduces stress**.

## **Facts & FAQs**

* Named for their **bright red or orange coloration**, warning predators of mild toxins.
* Native to **Madagascar’s humid lowland forests and swamps**.
* Females are **larger and more brightly colored** than males.
* When threatened, they **inflate and secrete a sticky, irritating toxin**.
* Lifespan of **6–10+ years** in captivity with proper care.

### **Supplies & Care Checklist**

* Secure glass terrarium (≥10–20 gallons for adults)
* Ceramic heat emitter or heat mat (thermostat-controlled, if needed)
* Digital thermometers and hygrometer
* Shallow, stable water dish with dechlorinated water
* Deep, moist substrate (coconut fiber, topsoil)
* Sphagnum moss for humid hides
* Misting system or spray bottle
* Feeding tongs for safe insect delivery
* Gut-loaded feeder insects
* Calcium and multivitamin supplements
* Cleaning supplies and amphibian-safe disinfectants
* Secure carrier for veterinary visits

*Yarmouth Veterinary Center*