

## African Dwarf Frogs

Dwarf African Frogs or *Hymenochirus boettgeri* only grow to up to 1.5 inches or so. Due to their small size, they have a lower propensity to eat small fish in their tank. Like the *Xenopus* species, they are fully aquatic. They have obvious webbing between their front toes and small eyes. They prefer to eat small live foods by scent. African Dwarf Frogs will also eat frozen (or live) bloodworms, brine shrimp, and daphnia. They will sometimes eat flaked fish food. In tanks with fish, the frogs can be given sinking fish foods to eat. Some may nibble algae-and plant based foods, more luck might be had with meat-based sinking foods like shrimp pellets. Their preferred temperature is about 77° F. with a pH of 7.2 to 7.6. Dwarf African frogs do best with heaters keeping their tank above 70° F. as they like it somewhat warm. Even though they can gulp air at the surface, they do need to get oxygen through their skin so mild aeration and filtration is a good idea.

### **Feeding**

Most amphibians only eat live foods. Aquarium frogs will eat some non-living foods but their preference is live food. African dwarf frogs love small worms and insects such as black-worms, bloodworms (insect larvae of a species of midge), mosquito larvae, brine shrimp (not so much a favorite), daphnia, and so on. If the frogs find something they want to eat, they will do their bounce and suck move. They do a little hop while opening their mouths. The suction that is created sucks up the food and the frogs chomp away. The frogs are attracted by smell and movement. They look for movement first but if they are hungry enough, they may suck up something that smells good. If live foods cannot be obtained, then frozen will do. Frog and Tadpole Bites may be purchased from your local aquarium supply store.

### **Breeding**

Mature male African dwarf frogs sing at the surface of the aquarium to attract the females. African dwarf frogs are sexually mature at 10-14 months old. Mature males have a white lump behind the front arm on the side of the body. It is said that males also sing under water by forcing air over their vocal chords. The eggs are laid singly or in groups on the surface. If eggs are found, they should be moved to separate tank or area to be raised because the frogs and fish will eat both eggs and tadpoles. African dwarf frogs can be raised on live baby brine shrimp.

## **Aquarium Frog Health**

### **Shedding**

Like all amphibians African dwarf frogs shed their skin as they grow, more often when young and maybe once a month when grown. This is normal and they often eat the skin. Presumably, eating the skin returns some of the nutrients to the frog. Perhaps they also like to clean up and reduce signs of their existence to avoid attracting predators. Prior to shedding the frog may appear whitish. If this passes after shedding, there is no problem. If the whitishness remains, the frog may be ill from bacterial or fungal infection.

### **Fungus**

Aquatic frogs often lose pieces of limbs here and there, perhaps from other frogs. Usually, they recover but sometimes fungus sets in. It may also occur in really dirty tanks or with other physical injuries. Fish fungal medications may not be prudent as the toxins may be worse for the frogs than the fungus. Instead, try treating with aquarium salt as a tablespoon per 3-5 gallons. Frogs generally do not like a lot of salt but neither do funguses. At these levels, the frogs will not be harmed but perhaps the fungus will be reduced.

## African Dwarf Frogs (cont)

### **Bloat**

Aquatic frogs may appear fat for a number of reasons including just eating too much or being a female with eggs but sometimes they get bloat. Bloat is probably caused by internal bacterial infection which messes with frog's ability to drain excess fluids (mostly water) from its body. So, it gets larger and larger, full of fluid. Treatment is to use aquarium salt at about a tablespoon per 5 gallons and to try aquarium fish antibiotics. A frog with bloat will literally look like it is ready to explode.