

## What must you do to prepare for your amphibian?

Not only is your amphibian veterinarian best qualified to evaluate the health of your new companion, but s/he can advise you about proper nutrition, parasite control, socialization, housing, grooming and other care that may be necessary to ensure the welfare of your new pet. During the initial exam he or she can evaluate the general health of your new pet amphibian and help check for external parasites. It is important to have a fecal sample checked to look for internal parasites.

New animals should be quarantined for at least a month and kept away from other amphibians you may have. Your veterinarian can help you determine when there is less risk to introduce a new amphibian, however this is never risk free.

## When you acquire a pet

*You accept responsibility for the health and welfare of another living thing. You are also responsible for your pet's impact on your family, friends, and community. A pet will be part of your life for many years. Invest the time and effort necessary to make your years together happy ones. When you choose a pet, you are promising to care for it for its entire life. Choose wisely, keep your promise, and enjoy one of life's most rewarding experiences!*

*For more information, visit,*  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)

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# Selecting an Amphibian



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*Pets are an important part of the American household. Your pet-owning experience will be most enjoyable if you carefully consider which pet best suits your family, home and lifestyle. Unfulfilled expectations are a leading cause of pet relinquishment, so make an informed decision. Take time, involve your family, and give careful consideration to the following questions.*

### **What's special about amphibians? What choices do you have?**

Amphibians have become popular pets. They are colorful and interesting. There are three basic types: Anura (frogs and toads), Caudata (salamanders, newts, sirens, axolotls, etc.) and Gymnophiona (caecilians – limbless amphibians). Some are strictly aquatic, others can spend some time out of water, some are mostly terrestrial (land dwelling) and some are even arboreal (tree dwelling). Compare the tiny poison dart frog that eats tiny insects to the large horned frog that eats mice. Beautiful, vocalizing tree frogs are also popular. Some owners purchase eggs for their ponds and can watch metamorphosis as the tadpoles develop legs and become frogs. Some frogs carry tadpoles on their backs. Some species seem stuck in one stage of metamorphosis, such as axolotls and tiger salamanders. Their gills are exposed throughout life even though they also have lungs.

### **What are the special needs of amphibians?**

Remember that the health of your amphibian is directly related to the health of its environment. They can respire through their skin and can also absorb toxins that way. Since most are aquatic to some extent, maintaining good water quality is of paramount importance. Beyond the importance of establishing filtration to remove waste products, many amphibians are sensitive to sudden water temperature changes. Amphibians need a balanced diet, clean water, appropriate light, and a suitable environment. They can also become ill and may require surgery or other veterinary care.

Amphibians are generally carnivorous and require live prey. An amphibian owner often finds himself also raising the insects to feed his pet, however some eat other prey including fish, worms and small vertebrates. Since each species is so different, you must research the animal you want to purchase. It is good to find out what is known about its natural habitat (diet, environmental conditions, etc.) as well as what has been done in captivity by others successful in keeping that species.

### **Who will care for your amphibian?**

While families should involve their children in caring for their amphibian, youngsters need the help of an adult who is willing, able, and available to supervise its daily care. Not all amphibians eat every day; so caring for amphibians when you leave can be easier with some species such as horned frogs that may eat only once or twice a week. Amphibians generally do better if cared for at home by friends or a service, since they are in their own environment. Some people are afraid of amphibians or don't like feeding prey items, so it isn't always easy to find friends to help out.

There is also a human health risk to consider when housing an amphibian. Amphibians can carry the *Salmonella* bacteria that can cause illness in people, good hygiene must be followed when handling amphibians. Children may be at higher risk of infection unless they are adequately supervised and taught to follow good cleanliness practices around their pet.

### **Does an amphibian fit your lifestyle?**

Amphibians are excellent alternatives for people who are allergic to furry or feathered animals. Feeding live prey may also mean loose crickets or insects in your home. Raising prey and maintaining exacting water quality can be challenging. Handling amphibians can damage their fragile skin. Some produce toxins and some will bite. Keeping some species is prohibited in certain states and municipalities and under certain housing rules. Permits may be required to keep certain amphibians.

### **Can you afford an amphibian? Where can you get an amphibian?**

Prices of amphibians vary greatly with species, rarity, age, size, coloration, etc. Often the housing is more expensive. Veterinary care is important, too. When you first obtain your pet amphibian, your amphibian veterinarian can advise you on good husbandry and help to check for parasites and preexisting disease. Amphibians can also become ill and may require surgery or other veterinary care. Most people purchase amphibians at pet store. Remember to be informed about the legality of a pet before you purchase it.

### **How can you select a healthy amphibian?**

You should familiarize yourself with the normal weight, coloration, and activities of the species you want to purchase by observing other animals or through research. You should see no external parasites or wounds and the eyes should be clear. You should find out if the amphibian has been eating and what it is eating. If not eating, there may be a problem. You will have more information from research. Amphibians that are raised to be pets will likely be healthier and live longer than animals taken from the wild, and their purchase supports sustainable practices. Remember, never release one of these animals into the wild, whether in a neighborhood park or wilderness area. It's not good for the animal or the native wildlife.

