

Roger's Aquatics & Pet Supplies: Firebelly Toads

Bombina orientalis is one of the most commonly sold amphibians in the pet trade. They are native to China, Korea, and Southern Russia. They attain a size of 1 – 2 inches, and with proper care, can live as long as 7 – 15 years, with some reports of toads reaching over 20. While they aren't harmful to the touch, these "toads" (they are actually a frog!) produce a toxin that makes them unappetizing to predators. They are also diurnal, unlike many of their frog cousins, so they are active during the day.

Enclosure: Size, Substrate, and Accessories

A 10 – 20 gallon tank can comfortably house 2-3 adult frogs. A larger aquarium will not only allow you to add more frogs, but also get more creative with your setup.

Firebelly toads inhabit swampy wetlands, so this type of environment should be replicated. In small tanks, a large dish of dechlorinated water can be provided for the frogs to jump into, with the land area made up of coco coir, ReptiSoil, or similar substrates. Gravel is sometimes used in addition to the soil. The gravel should be large enough that the frogs cannot ingest it. If a small gravel is used, a moss layer should be used as well to hold the rocks in place and prevent the frogs from ingesting any. In larger aquariums, gradual slopes can be made to create a more natural water area. In this sort of setup, a small filter would be needed to help maintain the water. Weekly water changes would also be needed to remove any waste. In this type of setup, you would also want to check your water quality, which will be discussed below. The firebelly toads should be provided with hiding spaces and foliage. Live or artificial plants can be used. Popular examples of live plants include pothos, java fern, and java moss. Logs and caves can also be provided for the frogs to enjoy.

Lighting and Heat

A daytime temperature of 70 – 75 F should be provided. Most households should easily be at this temperature, but a low wattage day time (white) bulb can be provided to achieve this if needed. At night, the temperature can comfortably drop between 60 – 68 F. A proper thermometer should always be used to measure the temperature. Too hot, and the animal could overheat. Too cold, and they won't grow properly or won't digest properly. Digital is preferred, since it is more accurate. A daytime cycle of light should be provided for the frogs. A daytime cycle of 12 hours of day, 12 hours of night should be provided. While there is nothing that suggests the frogs require UVB lighting, it can be beneficial. If provided, a 5.0 UVB light is sufficient, and should be replaced every 6 – 12 months depending on the bulb.

Diet and Supplements

Firebelly toads will accept a range of feeder insects. Their staple diet should be made up of crickets, but they can also eat waxworms as a treat, as well as chopped night crawlers. Occasionally, the frogs will go after aquatic snails and small fish if they are in the in water. Juveniles should be fed 2 -6 food items per frog daily, while adults can be fed every second day. All feeder insects should be gut loaded 1 – 24 hours before being fed.

Hydration and Humidity/Filtration and Water Quality

A water area must be provided at all times for the frogs to drink and soak in. Failure to provide this will result in death for the frogs, as they need to keep their skin moist. As mentioned before, in small tanks a water dish is acceptable. The water should be replaced every day or two, and bleached once a week to prevent the growth of bacteria. In larger tanks with a built in water feature, a filter should be provided (and maintained as per it's instructions), and a water change should be done once a week. This is to remove wastes from the

water and prevent them from becoming harmful. In order to keep track of how well you're doing this, testing the water will be required. Ideally, your test results should show a pH level of around 7.0, no ammonia, no nitrite, and very little nitrate. Small amounts of ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate are common, and it is easy enough to fix. High levels indicates toxic water, and should be dealt with immediately. Always ensure that any water going into the terrarium is dechlorinated.

Cohabitation

Firebelly toads do well in groups as long as adequate space is provided. For every 2 – 3 adult frogs, 10 gallons should be provided. They tend to be more active, and will exhibit more natural behaviours when together. The frogs may breed when kept together.

Sexing

It can be difficult to sex firebelly toads outside of the breeding season. During this time, the male frogs will develop black nuptial pads on the insides of the thumb, second finger, and forearms, and the feet, and will also begin softly croaking.

Checklist of Supplies

- ✓ 10 gallon or larger aquarium with lid
- ✓ Water dish (if small tank)
- ✓ Filter (if large tank with built in water feature)
- ✓ Substrate such as coco coir, ReptiSoil, etc
- ✓ Plants
- ✓ Day time lighting (heat bulb only if house is cool)
- ✓ Thermometer
- ✓ Insect keeper
- ✓ Insect diet
- ✓ Insect gut load