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POISON DART FROGS

Green and Black Poison Dart Frog

Dendrobates auratus

Dendrobates auratus is a diurnal poison frog of 3-5 cm from the rainforests of Central America and north-western Colombia, black with metallic green, blue or bronze markings. It is calm, thrives in groups and is regarded as one of the easiest poison frogs to keep and breed, provided humidity, food and temperature are right.

Family: Dendrobatidae Former name: *Phyllobates auratus*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**3-5 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**8-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
Skin toxins in the wild	**Mild**
Skin toxins in captivity	**None** Captive-bred animals. Wild-caught animals can keep their toxins for a long time
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 45 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**21-25 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-21 °C**
Humidity	**70-100%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 1-2 cm
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)**
Kept	**In pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles carried to water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Sexually mature	**8-12 months**
Eggs per clutch	**3-7**
Hatching	**10-14 days**
Larval period	**42-80 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Algae/plants and complete diet**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs and carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Allow at least about 38 litres per adult frog. A terrarium of 45 × 45 × 45 cm (about 90 litres) is therefore the minimum for a pair of *D. auratus*, and a trio or a small group needs at least 60 × 45 × 45 cm.

TEMPERATURE

By day the temperature should be 21-25 °C and at night 18-21 °C. The temperature must not exceed 27 °C for long, and above 29 °C can be fatal. Brief cold down to 16 °C is tolerated better than heat. Do not use a heat lamp.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Humidity should be 70-100 %. Mist thoroughly once or twice a day with reverse osmosis water or dechlorinated tap water, so that plants and leaf litter become wet, and let the surface dry out a little between mistings.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

D. auratus is fond of water and seeks it out both to hide and to breed, so a shallow water dish or a small water feature is a good idea. 1-2 cm of water is enough, and there must be a sloping edge or stones so that the frogs can easily climb out.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The plants need light, and an LED plant lamp that does not give off much heat is suitable. Day length has not been documented for the species; 12 hours of light is common practice.

FEEDING

Dendrobates auratus eats small arthropods. Flightless fruit flies are the obvious staple, because they are easy and cheap to keep in culture.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Dendrobates auratus is diurnal and peaceful and shows almost no aggression in most situations. It can be somewhat shy, but dense planting, hiding places and a small water feature make it show itself more.

NATIVE RANGE

Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia.