herpy

POISON DART FROGS

## Mimic Poison Frog

# *Ranitomeya imitator*

*Ranitomeya imitator* is a small, diurnal poison frog of 16-20 mm from northern Peru. Each local form mimics a different toxic frog in the same area, and the species was the first amphibian in which true monogamy was demonstrated: the pair look after the young together, and the female feeds each tadpole with infertile eggs.

Family: Dendrobatidae  Former name: *Dendrobates imitator; Ranitomeya intermedia*

KEY FACTS

### THE ANIMAL

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|---|---|
| Adult size | **16-20 mm**<br>snout-vent length |
| Lifespan | **5-10 years** |
| Active | **By day** |
| Lifestyle | **Arboreal and terrestrial** |
| Habitat | **Rainforest and montane forest** |
| Skin toxins in the wild | **Mild** |
| Skin toxins in captivity | **None**<br>Captive-bred animals. Wild-caught animals can keep their toxins for a long time |
| Difficulty | **Intermediate** |

### BREEDING

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|---|---|
| Reproduction | **Egg-laying** |
| Development | **Tadpoles carried to water** |
| Egg-laying site | **On the ground** |
| Sexually mature | **5-8 months** |
| Eggs per clutch | **1-8** |
| Hatching | **7-16 days** |
| Larval period | **60-80 days**<br>from hatching to metamorphosis |
| Larval diet | **Complete diet and unfertilised eggs from the female** |
| Parental care | **Guards the eggs, carries the tadpoles and feeds the tadpoles with eggs** |

### CARE

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|---|---|
| Min. enclosure | **45 × 45 × 45 cm**<br>L × W × H for 2 adults |
| Temperature, day | **21-26 °C** |
| Temperature, night | **18-22 °C** |
| Humidity | **70-100%** |
| Water | **Water dish**<br>depth 1-2 cm |
| UVB | **Optional** |
| Diet | **Small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)** |
| Kept | **In pairs** |

### PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

## Care at a glance

**THE ENCLOSURE**

A pair of *R. imitator* needs an enclosure of at least 45 × 45 × 45 cm. The frogs readily climb, so the height is used. Set up with a drainage layer, a substrate that holds moisture and a thick layer of dead leaves.

**TEMPERATURE**

Keep the enclosure at 21-26 °C by day and 18-22 °C at night. The species thrives best at about 21-24 °C. The temperature must not exceed 27 °C for long periods, and above 29 °C is dangerous: heat is more dangerous than cold.

**HUMIDITY AND MISTING**

Humidity should be 70-100 %. Aim for almost 100 % morning and evening and 70-75 % in the middle of the day, so the enclosure is allowed to dry out a little between mistings.

**WATER AND WATER QUALITY**

A shallow water dish or a bromeliad with water in the leaf axils is enough.

**LIGHTING AND UVB**

*R. imitator* is diurnal and lives in the shade under the forest canopy. The lighting is first and foremost for the plants. Give LED light for 12-14 hours a day, for example from 8 to 20 hrs.

**FEEDING**

The staple food is small arthropods: flightless fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*), springtails and small woodlice. Large adults can also take the larger *D. hydei*.

**BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING**

*R. imitator* is bold and diurnal and is often seen out in the open in the enclosure. The male calls from fixed spots, and both sexes defend the pair's territory against conspecifics.

**NATIVE RANGE**

Peru.