herpy

SALAMANDERS AND NEWTS

Western Tiger Salamander

Ambystoma mavortium

Ambystoma mavortium is a stout salamander, up to 30-35 cm long, from the prairies, forests and semi-deserts of North America, with yellow crossbars and blotches on a dark ground colour. The larvae live in water, while the adults spend most of their lives in self-dug burrows and emerge at night. Some animals never metamorphose and become sexually mature with their gills retained.

Family: Ambystomatidae

Mild skin toxins

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-30 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Semi-desert and temperate woodland and meadow**
Skin toxins	**Mild** Wash your hands after contact and keep your fingers away from your eyes and mouth
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**50 × 25 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**18-22 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**80-95%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Not required**
Diet	**Insects, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Larvae in water**
Egg-laying site	**In water**
Sexually mature	**5-36 months**
Eggs per season	**100-1,000**
Hatching	**19-50 days**
Larval period	**75-150 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Other larvae and small aquatic invertebrates (daphnia, mosquito larvae)**
Parental care	**None**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
EU annex	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Adults can be kept in many kinds of container. The simplest is a large plastic box with a tight-fitting lid and many small ventilation holes; a glass terrarium with a mesh lid gives a better view.

TEMPERATURE

The temperature should be 18-22 °C by day and preferably slightly lower at night, for both larvae and adults. The species tolerates cold better than heat. The larval tank is not heated, and the water must not exceed 24 °C.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

The substrate must be damp but never wet or muddy, because the animal absorbs water through its skin and does not drink through its mouth. Air humidity has not been measured for the species; a damp substrate gives roughly 80-95 %.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

A shallow, heavy water bowl is not essential, but it is a good safeguard: if the substrate becomes too dry, the animal seeks out the bowl, so it prevents deaths from desiccation.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The species is nocturnal and needs no special lighting. There is no evidence that it needs UVB, and strong UV light can damage the eyes and skin of amphibians.

FEEDING

Larvae and neotenic animals eat earthworms, compost worms, suitably sized crickets, waxworms and small fish. Small pieces of meat can be given as an occasional treat, but not as a staple, because meat lacks vitamins and minerals.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Adults burrow and lie hidden for most of the day. They are nocturnal and active hunters that lie in wait. Many animals learn to recognise their keeper and beg for food.

NATIVE RANGE

Canada, United States and Mexico.