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FROGS

Ornate Horned Frog

Ceratophrys ornata

Ceratophrys ornata is a stout, wide-mouthed frog from the Pampas of Argentina, Uruguay and southernmost Brazil, which lies buried and waits for something edible to pass by. Females grow up to 17 cm and can swallow prey almost as large as themselves. The species is robust and easy to keep, but demands respect for the mouth and a firm routine of cleaning and feeding.

Family: Ceratophryidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**8-17 cm** snout-vent length
Weight	**187-482 g**
Lifespan	**6-15 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Wetland and temperate woodland and meadow**
Skin toxins	**None known**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 45 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-24 °C**
Humidity	**65-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Winter rest	**16-20 °C** 6-12 weeks
Diet	**Insects, vertebrates and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles in water**
Egg-laying site	**In water**
Sexually mature	**12-24 months**
Eggs per clutch	**1,000-2,000**
Hatching	**2-4 days** at 24-26 °C
Larval period	**28-41 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Other tadpoles**
Parental care	**None**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

An adult needs a horizontal enclosure of at least 45 × 45 × 30 cm. The rule of thumb for the genus is a floor area of 8-10 times the animal's size, and a large female is welcome to more.

TEMPERATURE

During the day the enclosure is kept at 24-28 °C and at night at 22-24 °C. *C. ornata* eats best at the warm end and worse when it is cool. Over 30 °C or under 18 °C for a longer time can be fatal.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Humidity is kept at 65-80 % all year round and raised to about 90 % in the mating season. Mist lightly every day so that the substrate is moist but not wet.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

Always provide a shallow bowl of fresh, treated water, large enough for the whole frog to lie in, with the water reaching no higher than the frog's mouth.

LIGHTING AND UVB

UVB is not necessary, but a weak UVB tube (Ferguson zone 1) can be beneficial, because the frog gets a little UV in the wild.

FEEDING

The species eats almost anything that fits into its mouth. In the wild, adult frogs eat mainly vertebrates such as mice, small birds, lizards and other frogs, but also large spiders and insects.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Ceratophrys ornata is a sedentary frog that lies buried most of the time and comes out only to eat. It is not an animal to pick up. It can leap at a hand that comes too close, and the bite hurts.

NATIVE RANGE

Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil.