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FROGS

Brown Mantella

Mantella betsileo

Mantella betsileo is a small, diurnal frog from Madagascar with a brown to coppery back, often with a pale X-shaped pattern, black flanks and a blue-marbled belly. It grows to 2-3 cm, feeds on ants and other small arthropods and is robust and easy to keep in a group. Many animals in the trade are in fact the almost identical *Mantella ebenaui*.

Family: Mantellidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**2-3 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna and dry forest**
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 × 30 cm** L × W × H for 4 adults
Temperature, day	**20-25 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)**
Kept	**In groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles in water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Sexually mature	**12-18 months**
Eggs per clutch	**25-30**
Larval period	**42-56 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Algae/plants and complete diet**
Parental care	**None**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
An enclosure with a floor of 45 × 45 cm holds a small group of four to six adults. The frog lives on the ground, so floor area is more important than height, and 30 cm in height is plenty.

TEMPERATURE
Mantella betsileo thrives at room temperature, 20-25 °C by day, and at night the temperature may fall to 16-20 °C. The night temperature is borrowed from related species.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING
Humidity should be around 60-70 % day to day and up to 80 % in the breeding season, but the species tolerates a wide range. Mist the enclosure daily with decalcified water. The substrate should be damp, but not waterlogged.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY
Put a shallow water dish in the enclosure, and keep it always full.

LIGHTING AND UVB
A need for UVB is not known in the species.

FEEDING
The species is an eager hunter, but eats only small feeder insects. In the wild it feeds on ants, mites and other small arthropods.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
Mantella betsileo is diurnal, but spends a great deal of time under cover. The animals are somewhat shy, and it helps if the enclosure is densely planted. The males call with a peeping call and defend small territories.

NATIVE RANGE
Madagascar.