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POISON DART FROGS

Rio Santiago poison frog

Excidobates captivus

Excidobates captivus is a very small, diurnal poison frog of 12-17 mm from the border region between Peru and Ecuador. It is black with orange-red spots in rows along the back and yellow spots on the limbs and belly, and it lives on the forest floor in humid rainforest and montane forest.

Family: Dendrobatidae English name: Rio Santiago Poison Frog Former name: *Dendrobates captivus; Ranitomeya captiva; Adelphobates captivus* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**12-17 mm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest and montane 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	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**40 × 40 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**22-26 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**80-100%**
Water	**No water dish**
UVB	**Optional**
Diet	**Small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)**
Kept	**In pairs**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles carried to water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Eggs per clutch	**4-8**
Larval period	**65-75 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Algae/plants and complete diet**
Parental care	**Carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
Little is known about the care of *Excidobates captivus*. The species lives on the forest floor in warm to mild, permanently humid forest.

TEMPERATURE
The temperature at the species' localities has not been measured. 22-26 °C by day and 18-22 °C at night lies between the climate in the lowlands and at 800-1200 m elevation.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING
Humidity should be 80-100 %, and the substrate should be damp all year. Mist with reverse-osmosis or rainwater once or twice a day, or use a rain or fogging system. Make sure the air does not stand still.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY
A water dish is not necessary, because the frogs get moisture from the misting and the damp leaf litter. The water in bromeliads and film canisters is replaced with fresh reverse-osmosis or rainwater every week.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The species lives in shade on the forest floor, so the lighting should first and foremost support plant growth and a day of 12 hours. UVB is not necessary, but optional.

FEEDING
Excidobates captivus is so small that it can only take very small feeder insects: springtails, flightless fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) and the smallest woodlice.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
The species is diurnal, but hides a great deal in the foliage. The male calls short, shrill sounds from hidden spots. It is best kept as a pair, because several animals together can cause conflict.

NATIVE RANGE
Peru and Ecuador.