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POISON DART FROGS

Lovely Poison Frog

Phyllobates lugubris

Phyllobates lugubris is a small, black poison frog of 19-24 mm with two yellow, golden or orange stripes along the back. It lives on the forest floor in the lowland rainforest on the Caribbean side of Central America, from Nicaragua to Panama. It is occasionally seen in the trade, but little is known about its care.

Family: Dendrobatidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**19-24 mm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
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	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 45 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 3 adults
Temperature, day	**21-25 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-21 °C**
Humidity	**80-100%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 1-3 cm
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)**
Kept	**In pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles carried to water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Eggs per clutch	**7-21**
Larval period	**45-80 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Complete diet**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs and carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Little is known about the care of *Phyllobates lugubris*.
TEMPERATURE	The daytime temperature should be 21-25 °C and the night 18-21 °C, as for *Phyllobates vittatus*. Poison frogs are very sensitive to heat: above 27 °C should be avoided, and several hours at around 29 °C can be fatal.
HUMIDITY AND MISTING	Humidity should be 80-100 %, and the soil and leaf litter must always be moist. Mist the enclosure thoroughly 1-2 times a day with rainwater, reverse-osmosis water or dechlorinated water, or use a rain or mist system.
WATER AND WATER QUALITY	Adult frogs do not drink, but absorb water through the skin, and a shallow water bowl with 1-3 cm of water is enough. *Phyllobates vittatus* appreciates a small water feature, and in the wild the tadpoles are carried to streams.
LIGHTING AND UVB	The species lives on the forest floor, where the light is subdued, and UVB is not documented as necessary. A weak UVB lamp in Ferguson zone 1 is optional; if used, always provide shade.
FEEDING	*Phyllobates lugubris* eats mostly ants and mites in the wild. In the enclosure give small arthropods: wingless fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*), springtails, small isopods and newly hatched crickets.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is diurnal and lives hidden among leaf litter and plants. Males call from hidden spots and defend their territory against other males, so several males in the same enclosure can cause stress.
NATIVE RANGE	Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.