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POISON DART FROGS

Red-headed Poison Frog

Ranitomeya fantastica

Ranitomeya fantastica is a diurnal poison frog of 20-25 mm from northern Peru and one of the largest in the genus. It is unusually variable, and many forms have a bright orange, red or yellow head above a black body with light markings. The frogs are lightning-fast and often shy, the eggs are hard to find, and the species is best suited to a keeper who already has experience with poison frogs.

Family: Dendrobatidae Former name: *Dendrobates fantasticus* Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**20-25 mm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and 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	**40 × 40 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 3 adults
Temperature, day	**21-26 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-22 °C**
Humidity	**70-100%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 1-2 cm
UVB	**Optional**
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	**3-8**
Hatching	**10-14 days**
Larval period	**60-80 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Algae/plants and complete diet**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs and carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

A pair or a trio of *R. fantastica* can be kept in an enclosure of 40 × 40 × 40 cm. The figures go all the way down to 30 × 30 × 30 cm for 2-3 animals, but bigger is better. Many forms are arboreal and use the height.

TEMPERATURE

Keep the enclosure at 21-26 °C during the day and 18-22 °C at night. The species does best at around 21 °C and tolerates 18-27 °C, while temperatures above 29 °C can be fatal.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Humidity should be 70-100 %. A good rhythm is almost 100 % morning and evening and 70-75 % in the middle of the day, so the enclosure is allowed to dry out a little between mistings.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

A shallow water dish or a bromeliad with water in the leaf axils is enough.

LIGHTING AND UVB

R. fantastica is diurnal, and the lighting is first and foremost for the plants. Give 12-14 hours of light a day and darkness at night. It is not documented that the species needs UVB.

FEEDING

The staple food is small arthropods. Juveniles and adults take wingless fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*), and large adults can also take the larger *D. hydei*.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

R. fantastica is diurnal, lightning-fast and often shy, but many animals become bolder when they breed. You see most of them in a densely planted enclosure with hiding places.

NATIVE RANGE

Peru.