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POISON DART FROGS

Variable Poison Frog

Ranitomeya variabilis

Ranitomeya variabilis is a small, diurnal poison frog of 15-20 mm from the eastern slopes of the Andes and the Amazon. It has many local forms in yellow, green and blue with black markings, breeds in bromeliads and is known for the male carrying the tadpoles around between the plant's pools of water. A good first species among the small poison frogs.

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

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-20 mm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal and 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	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**40 × 40 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 2 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	**In leaf axils (e.g. bromeliads)**
Eggs per clutch	**1-10**
Hatching	**10-14 days**
Larval period	**60-80 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Complete diet and other tadpoles**
Parental care	**Carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

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

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
A pair of *R. variabilis* can be kept in an enclosure of 40 × 40 × 40 cm, and the same size suits a pair or a trio of the genus.

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, tolerates 18-27 °C and must never exceed 29 °C.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING
Humidity should be 70-100 %. Aim for almost 100 % morning and evening and 70-75 % in the middle of the day. The species can cope briefly at 50 % if it has clean water to sit in, but this is an emergency measure.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY
Give the frogs a shallow water dish or a small water feature, and keep the water so shallow that the smallest frog can sit with its head and upper body above the water; the species swims poorly.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The frogs are diurnal and live in the shade of the forest. The lighting is first and foremost for the plants: LED light for 12-14 hours a day is suitable.

FEEDING
R. variabilis is so small that it can only take small feeder insects: springtails, wingless fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) and small woodlice. Large adults can also take *D. hydei*.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
R. variabilis is diurnal and peaceful. The males call from elevated spots, and in the wild the species has a free mating system without fixed pairs and without defended territories.

NATIVE RANGE
Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil and French Guiana.