herpy

SALAMANDERS AND NEWTS

Axolotl

Ambystoma mexicanum

Ambystoma mexicanum is a large, fully aquatic salamander that never leaves the larval stage: it keeps its external gills, the fin along its tail and a broad, smiling head throughout its life, yet still becomes sexually mature. In the wild the species is critically endangered, but in the aquarium it is hardy and calm as long as the water is kept cold and clean.

Family: Ambystomatidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**20-30 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**10-15 years**
Active	**At dusk and at night**
Lifestyle	**Aquatic**
Habitat	**Wetland**
Skin toxins	**None known**
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 30 × 35 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**16-20 °C**
Temperature, night	**14-18 °C**
Humidity	**100%**
Water	**Aquaterrarium** depth 20-35 cm
Water temperature	**16-20 °C**
UVB	**Not required**
Diet	**Complete diet and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Stays in larval form for life (neoteny)**
Egg-laying site	**In water**
Sexually mature	**6-18 months**
Eggs per season	**100-1,000**
Hatching	**14 days** at 24 °C
Larval diet	**Other larvae and small aquatic invertebrates (daphnia, mosquito larvae)**
Parental care	**None**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Critically Endangered (CR)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

A. mexicanum is kept in an aquarium without a land area, because the animal never leaves the water. One adult needs an aquarium of at least 50 × 25 × 25 cm, and two adults at least 60 × 30 × 35 cm.

TEMPERATURE

The water temperature should preferably be 16-20 °C, and 16-18 °C is ideal; 14-22 °C is tolerated well.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Air humidity is irrelevant, because the animal never leaves the water, and misting is not relevant. Under the aquarium lid the air above the water is saturated with moisture, which is why the box says 100 %.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

The aquarium filter must be cycled for several weeks before the animal goes in. Use ordinary tap water treated with a water conditioner against chlorine, chloramine and heavy metals; chlorine is harmful to the species.

LIGHTING AND UVB

A. mexicanum does not need light, and UVB is not necessary. New animals are shy under strong light but get used to it if they have a hide. The light is first and foremost for your benefit and for any plants.

FEEDING

The species is greedy and eats worms, crustaceans, pieces of fish, soft insects and lean meat. Good staples are large earthworms, frozen bloodworms, tubifex and sinking pellets for trout and salmon.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The species stays mostly on the bottom and is calm and curious. It is not social, and an animal does not benefit from company; keeping several together is for the keeper's convenience and for breeding.

NATIVE RANGE

Mexico.