



Tomato Frogs

Dyscophus guineti & *D. antongilii*

BEGINNER · 3–4 IN ADULT · 8–12 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL BURROWER · MADAGASCAR

Nearly every tomato frog in US shops is *D. guineti*, the false tomato frog; care is the same. Round, glossy and traffic-cone orange, the tomato frog is Madagascar's most recognizable amphibian, and one of the easiest to keep well. It's a burrower: days spent buried to the eyeballs in damp substrate, evenings spent ambushing whatever walks past. Hardy and quiet, they make honest beginner amphibians, with one condition: this is a display animal you watch, not a pet you handle. The sticky defensive mucus is their opinion on the matter.

AT A GLANCE

Difficulty	Beginner
Day ambient	72–80 °F
Warm end	80–82 °F
Night drop	65–72 °F
Humidity	60–80%
UVB	Not required
Diet	Insects every 2–3 days
Adult size	3–4 in; males smaller
Lifespan	8–12 years



Fire-engine red and built like a toy. Most frogs in the trade are the look-alike *D. guineti*; *D. antongilii* itself is CITES-protected.

Photo: Marius Burger / iNaturalist · CC0

01

Look, Don't Touch

Tomato frogs are calm, hardy and completely uninterested in being held. Like all amphibians they drink and breathe through their skin, so hands-on contact costs them. Handle only when you must, with wet, freshly rinsed hands, and never with lotion or sanitizer on them. Push one too far and it inflates, then slicks itself in a white glue-like mucus that can irritate human skin. Consider that a well-worded request to be left alone.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Floor space beats height for ground-dwelling burrowers that will never use a tall vine wall. A single adult does fine in an 18×18×18; go 24×18×18 or larger when you can. Similar-sized adults can share, but size-match ruthlessly: this is an ambush predator with a wide mouth, and a much smaller cagemate reads as food. Whatever the footprint, treat substrate depth as part of the enclosure, not an accessory.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Metamorph	12×12×8	18×12×12	Tiny, cryptic metamorphs: expect vanishing food, not visible frogs.
Juvenile	18×12×12	24×18×12	Burrowing starts early. Deep substrate from day one.
Subadult	24×18×12	18×18×18	Secretive; judge condition at the evening feed, not by daytime sightings.
Adult	18×18×18	24×18×18	Females 3–4 in, males smaller. Groups can work; deep moist substrate is key.

Habitat-OS life-stage guidance for this burrower: footprint and substrate depth beat height.

03

Heat & Light

Room temperature does most of the work. Aim for 72–80 °F ambient with a warm end no higher than 80–82 °F, and let nights drop to 65–72 °F. That dip is natural, not a problem to fix. If the room runs cold, use a small thermostat-controlled heat mat on a side wall, never under the tank where a digging frog meets it. UVB isn't required; a modest daytime light and a steady day-night cycle cover their needs. When in doubt, run cooler: heat dries amphibians out fast.

04

Humidity & Water

Keep humidity between 60–80%. Moist substrate and a morning misting usually hold it there. Offer a shallow water dish they can sit in, no deeper than chin height; these are stocky burrowers, not swimmers. **Every drop of water they touch (dish, misting, rinse water) must be dechlorinated**, because chlorine and chloramine burn straight through amphibian skin. The same rule bans soaps, sprays and air fresheners near the enclosure; hot water is the only safe cleaner.

05

Substrate Is the Enrichment

For a frog that lives underground, substrate is the habitat. Use several inches of moisture-holding, chemical-free material: coco fiber, organic topsoil or a mix. Keep it damp enough to hold a burrow but never waterlogged. Top it with leaf litter and low cover plants; pothos handles the abuse. Skip gravel and anything fertilized or perlite-flecked. A bioactive setup with springtails suits them well. Daytime 'disappearance' isn't boredom; a buried tomato frog is a content one.

06

Feeding

An ambush feeder with a vacuum for a mouth. Offer appropriately sized crickets, roaches and earthworms every 2–3 days, at dusk when the frog is surfaced and hunting. Dust with plain calcium, D3-free and phosphorus-free, at most feedings; once or twice a week a D3 calcium replaces it. With no UVB that is their only D3, so keep the multivitamin to twice monthly. They eat past full, so watch shape, not enthusiasm: round, not spherical. Remove uneaten crickets; loose insects chew on sleeping frogs.

07

Health Red Flags

A frog that stops burrowing and sits exposed at midday is telling you something's wrong. Check temps, moisture and water first. Skin is the tell for everything else: sores, a red flush on the pale belly and thighs, cloudy film, or constant shedding all point to infection or bad water. Add bloating, sunken eyes or refused food and you're past troubleshooting. Amphibians crash fast, so act fast: an amphibian-experienced exotics vet within days, not weeks.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual - when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.