

Axolotl Care Sheet



Congratulations to you and your axolotl(s) for starting this journey together! Axolotls are adorable and pretty easy to care for, but only if you are prepared. This simplified care sheet which I have carefully written from experience should provide all the necessary information to successfully raise your axolotls. Should you require more details, simply contact me and I shall try my best to help you wherever possible.

Introduction

Axolotls are also called Mexican Salamanders and they are neither fish nor reptiles, but amphibians like frogs. They have become popular after discovering that they possess a magical power which allows them to regenerate body parts, including portions of their spine and brain! That being said, it does not mean they don't feel pain, stress or are invincible! Axolotls have a life span of 20 years or more. They are found at the bottom of lakes in (obviously) Mexico and are an endangered species in the wild due to overfishing, and in certain cultures, being cooked! **But do not worry.** Because captive bred axolotls are not endangered and actually make great pets!



List of equipment to get started:

- Aquarium
- Low power filter / air pump
- Clean bucket (free of any previous use of chemicals/detergents/soaps/dirt)
- Somewhere for your axolotls to hide
- Siphon (basically a hand water pump, very useful but optional)
- Tongs/ long tweezers (optional)
- Live plants (optional)
- Sand (optional)

Aquarium

An adult axolotl can grow up to 30cm long **and requires a bare minimum of 10 gallons of space for itself (I would recommend 12-15 if you want your axolotls to be comfortable)**. So if you plan to keep 4 in one tank, for example, do not go smaller than 50 gallons. Measure the tank and search for an aquarium volume calculator online to help you find a good size.

Substrate

This is important. **Do not use gravel or small pebbles**. Axolotls can and will swallow anything that fits in their large mouths. **I recommend sand or nothing at all**. (Some suggest using large stones, but I have never tried this method, not does it sound effective.) Here are some pros and cons of using sand.

Pros:

1. Gives the axolotls something to walk on, since they usually hang out on the bottom of the tank.
2. Allows you to plant live plants in the ground. You can also place the roots under a stone.
3. Makes the tank look nicer.

Cons:

1. Makes the tank harder to keep clean since uneaten food and droppings will mix with the sand, but if kept properly this can also be avoided.
2. Is expensive to buy ready and clean from the shop. If you wish to collect and use natural sand like I did from the beach, it must be thoroughly cleaned and dried before placing it in the aquarium.

Filtration

Axolotls live in lakes where there are barely any water currents. Therefore their aquarium should have a **small, low power filter or an air stone just to help keep it clean**. A strong current created by the filter will stress them out.

Lighting

Unlike many other animals and humans, axolotls have no eyelids because they live at the bottom of murky lakes where there isn't much light. **Thanks to this, any sort of lighting, even natural light, is unnecessary for your tank**. Remember: Light and still water is the perfect environment for algae to grow and can be very annoying to get rid of! Find a good balance between a weak current and low light to prevent this. Live plants are also very good at preventing algae by stealing sunlight from it.

Temperature

Axolotls like cold temperatures, so they don't require a heater (woohoo!). **Their comfortable temperatures are between roughly 16 to 22 degrees Celsius**, although I have seen axolotls survive in temperatures ranging from 8 to 26 degrees Celsius without showing signs of stress, so they are quite hardy but try to keep it constantly in the comfort zone.

Hides

The Mexican lakes provide axolotls with plenty of hiding spots and caves where they sit and wait for their prey. Their tank in captivity should always include at least 1 dark hiding spot for each salamander in the tank. Pet shops sell caves, rocks and other decorations, but using PVC pipes, plant pots, bowls, plants or whatever you can find that can provide adequate shelter for them to hide is a good, cheap alternative.

Water

Axolotls poo quite a lot and often leave uneaten food which dissolves in the water leaving waste toxins. Live aquatic plants help to prevent both waste and algae from dirtying the water. Water changes are essential in keeping the water clean. **I recommend changing around 25% of the water every week as a stable routine but**

adjust it to suit your needs. When kept properly the aquarium should not even need weekly changes. Water cycles are done either with a bucket and something to scoop with (A large jar or a 1 pint glass) or (my preferred way) a siphon, which allows you to accurately pick up droppings and food remains.

Food

There are many things you can feed your axolotl such as pellets, bloodworms, earthworms, waterworms... I have even read that people feed them mealworms, canned tuna (not in oil) and raw prawns/shrimp. **I have personally had great success with only frozen bloodworms and pellets, but do treat your adults with some earthworms if you manage to find any!**

Feed juveniles more often than adults (juveniles every 1- 2 days, adults every 3 days, for example). Give them how much you think is enough, just not too much as to not overfeed them and dirty your water if not eaten. Pellets are easy, just try to drop them as close to their mouth as possible so they don't miss any. With the bloodworms, I cut a frozen cube in half and feed it directly to each one using a pair of tongs. This makes sure they eat all the food and prevents any cleaning up, as the bloodworms will go all over the tank if the cube defrosts.

Tank Residents

It is highly recommended to keep axolotls only with other axolotls of roughly the same size and nothing else, for 2 reasons.

1. As mentioned before, axolotls have large mouths and swallow stuff. Any small creatures such as snails or fish face a large risk of being eaten.
2. Those frilly things on their head are gills (basically underwater lungs like fish, but inside out... yeah. They also grow an actual pair of lungs after their hind legs develop, but if you want to learn more about their biology contact me or do your research online). They are a delicate, vital organ for the axolotl, which unfortunately looks very much like a worm or other prey. Other animals, no matter what size or how friendly they are, might attack the axolotls.

That should sum up all you need to know about raising axolotls! I hope you take good care of them and enjoy watching them grow into big healthy beasts of the lake. ☺

