

Fire-Bellied Toad

A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

Fire-bellied toads are very colorful with green and black markings on their backs and vivid orange/red and black on their bellies. Although generally easy to keep, they do require live food. Since fire-bellied toads are not native, they should **never** be released.

Note: *Most toads never adapt to being touched, so it is best to leave them alone. We recommend wearing gloves when you must pick up a toad to move it. If no gloves are available, thoroughly rinse your hands to remove oils and salts that can damage the toad's skin. Always wash your hands after touching an amphibian or any part of an amphibian's habitat. For more information, go to Carolina.com (Teachers Resources tab; Care Sheets section) and view our "Amphibians, Reptiles, and Prevention of Salmonella Transmission" statement.*

Immediate Care and Handling

Open the shipping container and remove the cup of damp sphagnum moss that contains the toad(s). It is best to have a habitat ready to receive them. If you do need a temporary holding container, a pail with small holes punched in the lid is suitable. Place a flat rock in the pail and add springwater or dechlorinated tapwater until it is just below the top of the rock. (See the "General Guidelines on Living Materials from Carolina Biological Supply Company CareSheet" for information on removing chlorine and chloramines from tap water.) If left in this container for 3 days or longer, the toads will need feeding and their water changed.

Habitat

Fire-bellied toads spend more time in water than our native toads and are more active. We recommend our Herp Habitat™ (item #674006) for housing. You can also set up a habitat using a standard glass or plastic tank with a screened lid. A 10-gal tank will house 2 to 3 toads. Using 4 to 8 cm (1½ to 3") of washed gravel for substrate, create a sloping land mass and shallow pool for water. Maintain a ratio of ¾-land area to ¼-water area. Fill the pool area about 8 to 10 cm (3 to 4") deep with springwater or dechlorinated tapwater.

Alternatively, you can create a habitat by using a large glass or plastic pan in one end of the tank and filling the rest of the tank to the pan's brim with moist potting soil. Place a few rocks in the pan to make

it easier for the toads to crawl out, and then fill the pan with water.

In the terrestrial side, add moss and shelters made of cork bark or other materials for hiding. If you use plants, you can illuminate the habitat with a fluorescent aquarium light. The toads do well at daytime temperatures of 18 to 25° C (64 to 77° F) and nighttime temperatures of 12 to 15° C (54 to 59° F), so heaters are not needed. **Note:** *Temperatures over 26° C (80° F) can kill the toads.*

Maintenance

Fire-bellied toads are voracious eaters, swallowing almost anything that moves and fits into their mouths. Let them acclimate a day in their new home before feeding, then offer food every 2 to 3 days. Crickets (item #143556) are a staple food, but the toads may also accept mealworms (item [#144272](#)), pill bugs (item [#143060](#)), redworms (item [#141650](#)), and waxworms (item [#143928](#) wax moth larvae). Every 3 to 4 weeks, dust the food with a mineral/vitamin supplement.

Siphon out and replace the water weekly or sooner if it becomes foul. Clean water is essential to your toad's health. When the habitat needs a complete cleaning, transfer the toad to a holding pail, disassemble the habitat, and clean the tank with hot water. **Note:** *Do not use soap or detergents, which may harm the toad.* Reassemble the habitat with fresh materials and replace the toad.

FAQs

How long should I expect my fire-bellied toads to live?

In captivity, fire-bellied toads may live from 5 to 15 years when kept under optimal conditions.

Do fire-bellied toads secrete a poison?

Yes. Fire-bellied toads secrete toxins from their skin as a defense mechanism. These toxins are usually no threat to humans; however, a few sensitive individuals develop skin rashes after contact with a fire-bellied toad. Remember, the oils and salts on your hands can injure a toad. We recommend that you wear gloves when handling fire-bellied toads and wash your hands after handling them.

Is it OK to keep my fire-bellied toads with other organisms?

It is best not to mix the toads with other organisms. The toxins secreted by the fire-bellied toads may kill those organisms. Additionally, fire-bellied toads are aggressive eaters and may have the other animal for

dinner.

Why are my fire-bellied toads dying?

These toads are sensitive to water chemistry, in particular chlorines and chloramines commonly found in tapwater, but also copper ions or ions of other metals in their water. Make sure your water conditioner removes these materials. If you are using tapwater, try switching to spring or bottled water, but you should be changing the water frequently—even if you are using filtration. These toads become stressed without places to hide in their habitat. Add a few pieces of cork bark, plant pots, or other material placed so that the toads can retreat into them. If you are using a light source, try turning it off to further reduce stress. Fire-bellied toads require high humidity, so frequently mist the habitat with springwater.

Why are my toads making a sound that resembles a dog's bark?

This is the male's mating call. If a female responds, you will soon witness mating of the toads.

Problems? We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

Orders and replacements: 1-800-334-5551, then select Customer Service.

Technical Support and Questions: caresheets@carolina.com



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