



African Dwarf Frog Facts

- African Dwarf Frogs belong to the Genus *Hymenochirus*. Frogs of this kind are widely available as aquarium pets.
- Like other frogs, African Dwarf Frogs are amphibians, but unlike many amphibians, they spend their entire lives in water. They must come to the surface to breathe but spend most of the time underwater.
- These frogs are small, growing up to 6.4 cm (2.5 inches) in length. Their average life expectancy is around 5 years. Some can live longer but many die at an earlier age because they don't receive proper care.
- African Dwarf Frogs are social animals, so they are best kept in groups of two or more.
- A frog aquarium should hold 4-8 litres (1-2 gallons) of water for each African Dwarf frog. This gives each frog enough room to swim around and makes it more manageable to keep the water clean and balanced (too little water and the aquarium gets dirty very quickly).
- Despite being aquatic, these frogs actually are not great swimmers, they should not be kept in deep aquariums (not more than 20 inches deep), and it's important that there are no strong water currents in the tank.
- African Dwarf Frogs should not be taken out of water since they cannot tolerate dry conditions.
- Although these frogs can be kept with some docile tropical fish, African Dwarf frogs are not usually aggressive eaters, so care must be taken to ensure the fish do not eat all the food.

African Dwarf Frogs: The Good Stuff

- Relatively low maintenance and fairly easy to keep with basic attention to aquarium management and feeding.
- Quite active and therefore can be entertaining to watch.
- Diet is easily managed.
- Small and don't need extravagant aquariums.



African Dwarf Frogs: The Bad Stuff

Problem #1 - Disease

Like other amphibians (and most reptiles), frogs can be carriers of *Salmonella*, a bacterium which can cause serious disease in people, especially young children, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems.

Large outbreaks of salmonellosis have been linked to contact with African Dwarf Frogs. In people, salmonellosis usually causes diarrhea. Most people recover in a few days, but some people become very sick when the bacteria get into the bloodstream. Death is rare but can occur.

There's no way to tell by looking at a frog whether it is carrying *Salmonella*. Most frogs that carry *Salmonella* look completely healthy, but they shed the bacterium in their stool, which contaminates their aquarium water and potentially anyone who has contact with them, their aquarium or water from the aquarium.



Problem #2 - Welfare

Ethical concerns have been raised by some groups about how African Dwarf Frogs are raised commercially. Also these frogs are often kept in inappropriate conditions, do not receive proper care and therefore have only short (and likely unhappy) lives.

The tiny habitats that are often sold in stores for African Dwarf Frogs are not adequate. African Dwarf Frogs should never be kept by themselves because they are social animals, and each frog needs 4-8 litres of space in an aquarium (so minimum aquarium size would be 8-16 L for two frogs).



Thinking About Getting A Frog?

Like any pet, thought and planning should go into purchase of an African Dwarf Frog. If you're thinking about getting a frog, it's important to ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ Can I take good care of it?
 - ▶ Am I willing and able to take care of it for its entire lifespan (up to five years)?
 - ▶ Do any high-risk individuals (children less than five years of age, the elderly, pregnant women, immunocompromised individuals) live with me or visit me, because these people would be at risk of getting very sick from *Salmonella* shed by the frog.
- ▶ Remember that just keeping high-risk individuals away from the frog aquarium is not always enough to prevent transmission of *Salmonella*. Every time you or another person touches the frogs, the tank or the water in the tank they can potentially spread bacteria to other surfaces in your home.

Caring For Your African Dwarf Frog

Feeding: African Dwarf Frogs will eat a variety of food, including brine shrimp, bloodworms, commercial frog foods, some commercial fish foods, krill, small pieces of worms and small live fish. They don't have teeth and swallow their food whole, so food must be of an appropriate size. They eat off the bottom of their aquarium.



Aquarium: A frog aquarium should never be kept in the kitchen or bathroom, in order to reduce the risk of contamination of surfaces in these rooms with *Salmonella*. It should also not be in the bedroom of any young child.

Handling Your Frog: Don't. African Dwarf Frogs are "look at me! (but don't touch me)" pets. They can be injured during handling and do not tolerate being out of water.

It's just a fairy tale!

Kissing a frog won't turn it into a prince, but it might give you *Salmonella*. Don't do it!

Wash Your Hands!

Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water after touching a frog, touching anything a frog has touched, or cleaning an aquarium. It is important not to touch any parts of your own face, another person, or any objects or surfaces before washing your hands, as this can spread bacteria in the environment.

Cleaning Up

Keeping your frog's environment clean is essential for the health of your frog. Do not overfeed your frog as this is a major contributor to dirty water. Water should be monitored regularly to help determine how often it should be changed. **Never dump dirty water down a sink in the kitchen or bathroom.** Any water spills should be promptly cleaned up and always wash your hands well after cleaning a frog's aquarium.



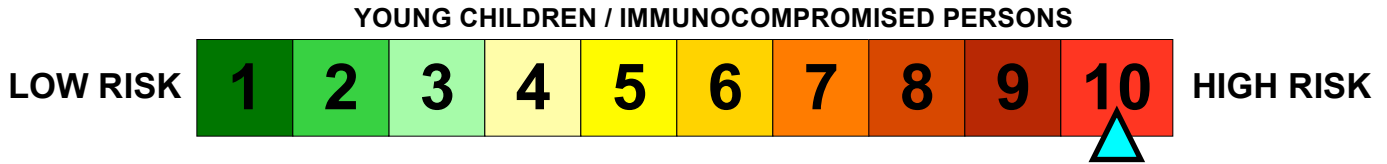
Should I Have My Frogs Tested For *Salmonella*?

No. There is no reason to treat a healthy frog even if it is positive for *Salmonella*. We have no evidence that antibiotics can eliminate *Salmonella* carriage in frogs, and treatment might just make the bacterium more resistant. Even with a negative *Salmonella* test, there is no way to say it was **absolutely** negative and risk-free, since screening tests aren't 100% accurate. To be safe, it's best to assume your frogs are *Salmonella*-positive and manage them appropriately.



What Is The Risk?

Young children are at an increased risk of being infected by *Salmonella* from a pet frog, because their immune systems are not as strong and they often put their fingers or objects in their mouths. **People who are immunocompromised** (e.g. HIV/AIDS patients, transplant recipients, cancer patients) are also more likely to get sick from *Salmonella* because their immune system cannot fight infections as efficiently. For this reason, frogs should **NOT** be kept in households where these people live or visit frequently. For these groups, African Dwarf frogs are:



For **healthy adults and older children**, the risk of getting *Salmonella* from a pet frog is always present, but can be reduced by not handling the animal, proper aquarium cleaning and practicing good hand hygiene. For these groups, African Dwarf Frogs are:

