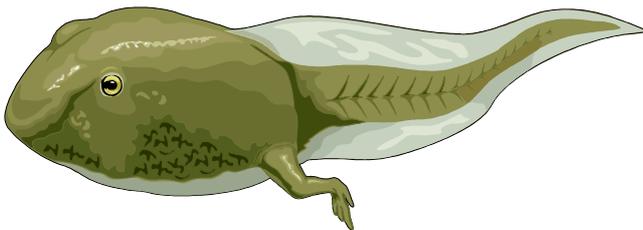


TADPOLES



A tadpole is the aquatic larval stage of a frog, and also an amphibian. The word amphibian comes from the Greek amphi, meaning “both” and bios, meaning “life”. It describes cold-blooded animals with backbones that pass their lives both in fresh water and on land. Tadpoles breathe by means of external gills instead of lungs and as they transform to adult form they change from gill breathers to lung breathers. This process is called metamorphosis and comes from the Greek meta, meaning “change” and morphe, meaning “form”.



Tadpoles resemble fish rather than frogs as they are limbless, slender and have distinctive gills. Metamorphosis will alter the physical shape as well as breathing and feeding habits. Tadpoles undergo four remarkable changes that are easy to observe.

1. They grow legs - back legs first and then the front.
2. They slowly lose their tails.
3. Breathing with gills changes to breathing with lungs.
4. Diet changes from plant only to live insects.

A female frog is capable of producing thousands of offspring during its lifetime, this is because during the process of metamorphosis many will die and others will be destroyed by predators.

Water

Tadpoles depend on having fresh, clean water. A small air or power filter will aerate as well as filter the water of any waste and excess food. Even if a filter is being used regular water changes should be done with 1/3 once a week and if no filter is used, 1/3 twice a week. Tap water needs to be de-chlorinated before use as even the smallest amount of chlorine can kill tadpoles. The easiest way to do this is to use de-chlorinating drops, or alternatively, leave a bucket of water to stand for a few days in the sun. Never use soap or cleansers when cleaning your tadpole aquarium, a new cleaning cloth and plain water is sufficient.

Food

The first thing tadpole larvae feed on is the egg case. As tadpoles they are plant eaters, evolving to eventually become meat eaters, with adult frogs feeding primarily on insects. Tadpoles should be fed twice a day and the following foods can be used.

Goldfish flakes are mainly vegetable based with added vitamins and minerals, fed sparingly tadpoles will thrive on this.

Algae wafers are discs of dried algae and are a convenient way to provide them with a food normally eaten in the wild.

Boil lettuce or spinach leaves for 10 to 15 minutes, drain, chop, then freeze the leaves in flat sheets. Break off what you want to feed and return the rest to the freezer.

It is important not to over feed as this will dirty the water, and just as importantly do not underfeed as tadpoles can turn carnivorous to get enough to eat. If you notice the water becoming cloudy, reduce the amount of food you are feeding and change some of the water.

As the front legs of the tadpole start to grow you will find that they will no longer eat, it is at this

point that they reabsorb their tail as a food source and the tail will appear to shrink. It will not be necessary to feed as you have been, as all you will be doing is polluting the water with food that will remain uneaten.

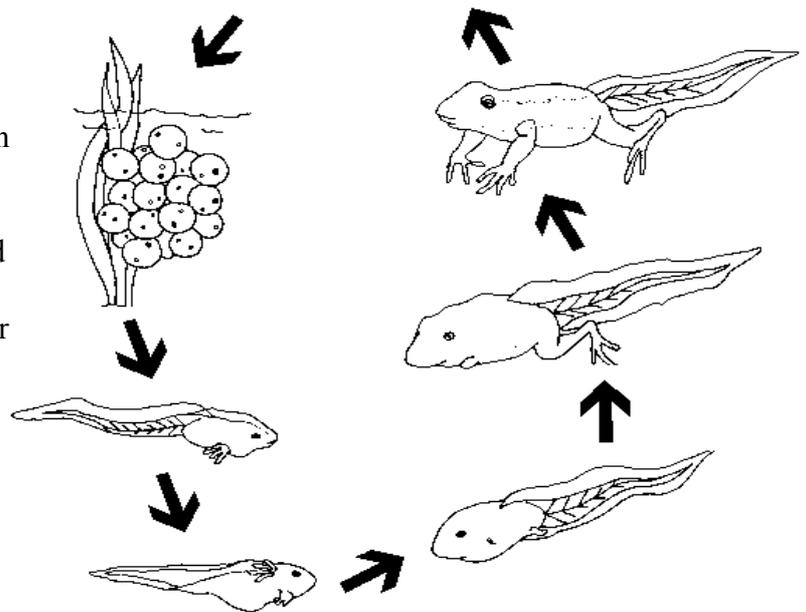
Temperature

If the tadpoles are local frogs you will not need to heat the water, whereas tropical frog tadpoles will need an aquarium heater. Avoid overheating regardless of the type of tadpole, avoid placing the aquarium in full sun or if a heater is used don't have the temperature higher than 24°C. During cold spells you will find that metamorphosis will slow but the average time frame for the tadpoles to change is between 6 to 9 weeks.

Environment

As a tadpole the water level in your aquarium is not critical as they are totally reliant on water to survive. Try not to overcrowd and have more tadpoles than your aquarium can comfortably hold, a good guide is no more than two tadpoles for every 4 litres. As emerging metamorphosing froglets start to develop, it will be necessary to reduce the water level slightly and provide rocks or driftwood for them to climb on, or they can drown. Ensure that you have lids over your aquarium from this stage to prevent young frogs from escaping. By keeping to these few simple suggestions you will find that raising tadpoles is rarely difficult.

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