



CONCISE CARE SHEETS

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**V I E T N A M E S E
M O S S Y F R O G**

INTRO

The Mossy Frog (*Theleoderma corticale*) is native to northern Vietnam and nearby China and is also thought to be found in adjacent Laos. It is a semi-aquatic frog that inhabits pools and streams among caves and rocky cliffs in evergreen rainforests. It is a beautiful species that has become a popular terrarium pet and thrives in naturalistic terrariums constructed to simulate their semi-aquatic habits and cool and humid environment.

Vietnamese Mossy Frogs are members of the family Rhacophoridae, which are popularly known as shrub or bush frogs and includes the amazing Asian "flying" or gliding frogs. Vietnamese Mossy Frogs, also known as Tonkin Bug-eyed Frogs, do not have adaptations for gliding. They are members of the genus *Theleoderma*, which literally translates as "nipple skin". Their cryptic color and pattern, as well as the texture, resembles that of mossy rocks in their habitat and provides excellent camouflage.

Vietnamese Mossy Frogs may thrive in captivity if provided with cool conditions and a naturalistic habitat that resembles mountain streams. They will spend much time in the water and rainwater or other non-chlorinated water kept clean by filtration is essential.

GENERAL CARE & ENVIRONMENT

Vietnamese Mossy Frogs should not be exposed to temperatures above 80°F and typically thrive and comfortable household ambient temperature. Ideally, temperatures in the high 60s to low 70s should be maintained, which may necessitate moving enclosures to basements or other cool areas in the home during the summer months. These frogs will tolerate temperatures as low as 50°F.

Like most frogs, Vietnamese Mossy Frogs prefer a humidity range of 70-90+%, but can tolerate humidity as low 50% for short periods of time as long as the frogs have access to clean water. *Theleoderma corticale* is a largely aquatic frog, easily spending most of its periods of activity at the water's edge or even underwater. Low humidity levels, especially without access to water, can quickly be fatal.

Since ideal temperature and humidity is of paramount importance, a min/max thermometer with a probe that can be inserted into the enclosure is an essential tool. Both temperature and humidity should be monitored several times each day and observations should be recorded.

HOUSING

Suitable enclosures for Vietnamese Mossy Frogs include modified glass aquariums and commercially available terrariums such as those made by ExoTerra. For example, the 24"L x 18"H x 18"D or 18" cube models are ideal for housing a small group of these semi-aquatic frogs. The larger size is good for 3-4 adults, whereas the 18" cube is best for a single pair. Glass aquariums have the benefit of being designed for water and are well-sealed. When using a reptile terrarium most keepers will create a pool using a separate container (e.g., plastic storage box) placed inside or will take care to reseal the glass seams of the terrarium with aquarium silicone sealant.

Many keepers prefer to breed Vietnamese Mossy Frogs in larger groups and elect to construct large terrariums where the entire bottom is filled with three inches or so of water and land islands with rock structures and moist moss and even terrestrial and aquatic plants are provided. A good submersible terrarium pump is necessary to keep the water clean, and most keepers like to use a small pump with a discharge that creates moving water. Many keepers hide the submersible pump's body by using large river rocks that create a land area at one end of the enclosure. Some of these habitats may be as large as 48"L x 24"D x 24"H and include vertical rock cliffs much like these frogs find in nature. Vietnamese Mossy Frogs breed in tree holes containing standing water and these retreats may be more easily created in larger habitats with sufficient height.

A simple habitat that is easy to clean can be created from a large aquarium with a top that is 2/3 covered to retain humidity. An aquarium

QUICK TIPS

- » 66-72°F ambient temperature a tolerated range with 50-78°F. Temps of 80+°F may be fatal.
- » Requires 70-100% humidity.
- » Eats insects and other arthropods and thrives on crickets in captivity.

hood with a full-spectrum fluorescent light can be used to create a 12 hour day/12 hour night photoperiod and is beneficial both to the frogs and any live foliage. Incandescent lighting creates heat and is not recommended. A submersible filter and pump hidden in large river rock (2-3" in diameter) at one end creates a land area that can be enhanced with moss. A few floating pieces of cork bark will offer additional islands.

FEEDING

Vietnamese Mossy Frogs will feed readily on crickets that have been gut-loaded for maximum nutrition and are dusted with a reptile vitamin and mineral supplement. Since these frogs are largely nocturnal, feeding at night every other day is appropriate. The biggest challenge is preventing the crickets from drowning in the pool or having their supplement coating washed off by the water or moist substrate. The use of floating food dishes is an excellent way to eliminate these problems. A six-inch diameter deli cup about three inches high is perfect. Line the bottom of the cup with paper towel that has been tightly pressed down to completely cover the bottom and make it difficult for the crickets to crawl beneath. Add the dusted crickets and place the cup on top of the pond. A variety of other insects may be used to optimize nutrition and enhance enrichment.

HEALTH

Water quality is essential to healthy frogs and rainwater (or quality tap water that has been allowed to sit uncovered for 24 hours and is then treated with a terrarium/aquarium dechlorinator) must be used. Water should be tested and treated or replaced as necessary due to high levels of toxins like ammonia. Fungal infections should be treated by a qualified reptile veterinarian (www.arav.org).

HANDLING

Amphibians have moist, delicate skins that are permeable to liquids and toxins and may become vulnerable to infections due to abrasions. They are hands-off terrarium pets.

SEXING VIETNAMESE MOSSY FROGS

Adult females typically measure 3.5" in body length, while the more slender males rarely exceed 2.75". There has long been a predominance of females in the hobby, which is thought to be due to incubation temperatures (temperature-dependant sex determination or TDSD). Vietnamese Mossy Frogs usually mature at about seven or eight months of age and sexing is difficult prior to then. In addition to the size difference between sexes, and the fact that females are noticeably more heavy-bodied, males tend to have a red nuptial pad on the inside of each front foot. This pad becomes bright red and swollen during the breeding season, but may be noticeable year round. Males also have a soft, owl-like "hooting" call.

BREEDING VIETNAMESE MOSSY FROGS

As mentioned above, one of the bigger challenges to breeding these frogs in captivity may be obtaining males. However, they seem to be more readily available now than they once were. Still, it will take obtaining a decent sized group to ensure that you have both sexes. Hopefully you will hear vocalizations among your mature frogs and eventually witness amplexus (courtship behavior with males grasping the larger females from behind). Keepers report inconsistent results with some groups breeding prolifically while others breed little if at all. Although in nature these frogs usually lay eggs in temporary pools in tree holes and rocky hollows, in captivity females may lay eggs in places such as where branches or other cover enters the water or among live or artificial aquatic vegetation. Most breeders immediately remove the eggs and incubate in petri dishes. More information can be found on the Internet.