

FREE SAMPLE

Axolotl Care Package

The first 6 pages of the 42-page printable manual, free to keep.



In this sample: What's inside, How to Use This Package, Quick Profile, Cost, Commitment & Fun Facts, Where Axolotls Are Legal. The contents page shows every one of the 42 pages, so you can see exactly what the full package covers before you buy it.

Not in this sample: the 36 pages that follow, which are the full care guide, the health section, the quick reference cards, and the owner tools, checklists and logs.

The full package is \$8.99 at beastlyfacts.com/care-packages/axolotl/. One purchase, and every corrected edition is a free re-download from your library. The free axolotl care guide it was built from is at beastlyfacts.com/guides/axolotl/, and stays free.

CONTENTS

What's inside

Every page is written to be used, not just read once.

GETTING STARTED

How to Use This Package	3
-------------------------	---

SECTION 01 · QUICK PROFILE

Quick Profile	4
Cost, Commitment & Fun Facts	5
Where Axolotls Are Legal	6

SECTION 02 · FULL CARE GUIDE

Tank Size & the Cold-Water Setup	7
Temperature: The Numbers That Matter	8
Cooling Methods & the Summer Plan	9
Filtration & Flow	10
Cycling, With or Without an Axolotl	11
Water Targets & Testing	12
Water Changes & Early Warnings	13
Substrate, Hides & Decor	14
Choosing an Axolotl, Morphs & Sexing	15
Housing Together & Tankmates	16
Bringing One Home, Quarantine & Handling	17
Diet & Feeding by Age	18
Staples, Treats & the Never-Feed List	19
Common Mistakes	20
Enrichment: Hides, Foraging & Novelty	21
Growth, Body Condition & Reading Waste	22

SECTION 03 · HEALTH & COMMON ISSUES

Health Red Flags	23
Heat Stress & Reading the Gills	24
Fungal & Bacterial Infection	25
Impaction, Floating & Gas	26
Burns, Injuries & Other Conditions	27
Tubbing, Cooling & Salt Baths	28

SECTION 04 · QUICK REFERENCE

Setup Checklist & Targets	29
Emergency & Quick Targets Card	30

SECTION 05 · OWNER TOOLS

Budget & Shopping List	31
First 30 Days	32
Symptom Quick Reference	33
Daily, Weekly & Seasonal Routine	34
Power Outages, Heat Waves & Transport	35
Pet-Sitter Sheet	36
Owner Log	37
Equipment & Maintenance Log	38
Enrichment Checklist & Log	39

REFERENCE

Glossary	40
Sources	41
Where Sources Disagree, Version History & About	42

START HERE

How to use this package

Four ways to get value from it, depending on where you are right now.

If you haven't set up yet

Read pages 4 through 14 in order before buying anything, and check page 6 first if you are in California, New Jersey, Maine or Washington DC. Cooling is the decision that shapes the whole budget, and it is far cheaper to plan for than to retrofit in July. Expect to spend several weeks cycling the tank before an axolotl goes in it. Then use the Budget and Shopping List on page 31 to buy once.

If your axolotl is already set up

Jump to the Setup Checklist and Targets on page 29 to audit what you have, and the Health Red Flags section starting on page 23 if anything seems off. Check the temperature and test the water before you change anything else. Most axolotl problems that look like disease are a thermometer reading or a water reading, and you cannot rule either out by looking at the animal.

If the water is already too warm

Go straight to page 8. Warmth is the single most common way a pet axolotl is harmed, and the fixes that work in the next hour are not the same as the ones that work all summer. Do not drop the temperature all at once, and do not add a heater at any point for any reason.

Print these first

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Page 29: Setup Checklist & Targets | ☐ Page 36: Pet-Sitter Sheet |
| ☐ Page 30: Emergency & Quick Targets Card | ☐ Page 37: Owner Log |
| ☐ Page 33: Symptom Quick Reference | ☐ Page 38: Equipment & Maintenance Log |
| ☐ Page 34: Daily, Weekly & Seasonal Routine | ☐ Page 39: Enrichment Checklist & Log |

WHY THIS PACKAGE EXISTS

Axolotl advice online contradicts itself most on the two things that matter most: how cold the water has to be, and what is safe to put on the tank floor. This package gives numbers you can test against, cross-checked against veterinary and research-colony sources, listed on page 41. Every temperature and dimension is given in both imperial and metric.

NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR

An amphibian or aquatic veterinarian. This is a husbandry reference for day-to-day care. Anything urgent or health-related is always a professional call, not a page in this book. Vets who see axolotls are rarer than small-animal vets, so find one before you need one and write the number on page 30.

SECTION 01

Quick profile

Everything at a glance before you read the detail.

Scientific name	<i>Ambystoma mexicanum</i> , a mole salamander and a close relative of the tiger salamanders
Adult size	Most reach 9 to 10 in (23 to 25 cm); some individuals reach about 12 in (30 cm)
Captive lifespan	10 to 15 years with consistent care. Wild lifespans are shorter, and are not the number to plan around
Sexual maturity	About 1 year
Water temperature	60 to 68°F (16 to 20°C), with the cooler half of that band preferred. Never above 72°F (22°C)
Tank minimum	20 gal long (78 L) for one adult, 40 gal breeder for two. Juveniles can start in 10 gal (38 L)
Water chemistry	Ammonia 0 ppm, nitrite 0 ppm, nitrate under 10 ppm, pH 7.4 to 7.6, dechlorinated tap water
Diet type	Carnivore. Earthworms and nightcrawlers are the nutritionally complete staple
Feeding	Juveniles daily, adults every 2 to 3 days
Housing	Species-only, no fish. Juveniles alone, adults in pairs only with volume and hides
Handling	Medical necessity only. This is a look-at pet, not a hold-it pet
Wild status	Critically Endangered (IUCN). Effectively every pet axolotl is captive-bred

THE ONE-LINE VERSION

An axolotl is a cold-water aquarium animal that gulps whatever fits in its mouth. Keep the water cold, keep the floor safe to swallow, and most of the rest of this package is maintenance.

What "never grows up" actually means

An axolotl is paedomorphic: it reaches full adult size and breeds normally while keeping the feathery external gills, tail fin and fully aquatic life of a larva. That is not the same as staying a baby, and it is not quite permanent either. The tissues still answer to thyroid hormone, and researchers can push an axolotl through the land-going metamorphosis a tiger salamander does on its own. What is switched off is the hormonal trigger, not the ability. In a home tank that switch essentially never flips, which is why nothing in a correct axolotl setup needs a land area or a basking spot.

SECTION 01

Cost, commitment & fun facts

The animal is the cheap part. Cooling is what sets the budget.

THE AXOLOTL

\$30 to \$100 for a standard morph. Rarer colors such as mosaic or GFP run higher.

SETUP, NO CHILLER

\$200 to \$500, and only honest if your room genuinely holds under 68°F (20°C) year round.

SETUP WITH A CHILLER

\$450 to \$900. The chiller alone is \$150 to \$400 and is the line that separates the two ends.

MONTHLY

\$15 to \$45 for food, conditioner, filter media and the chiller's electricity.

What you are actually committing to

COMMITMENT	WHAT IT MEANS IN PRACTICE
10 to 15 years	Longer than most people expect from a small aquatic animal. Plan for house moves, college, and summers away.
A cold room, or a chiller	The cost that varies most by climate and by season. A warm apartment in August is the scenario to budget for, not the mild week you buy the tank in.
Weekly testing and water changes	Around 20 minutes a week once the routine is set, plus five minutes daily to check temperature and appetite.
A vet you have already found	Amphibian-experienced vets are uncommon. Finding one after something goes wrong wastes the days that matter most.

BUDGET FOR THE BAD MONTH TOO

Surgery for a swallowed gravel impaction, or a course of treatment for a severe bacterial or fungal infection, costs well beyond routine care. Neither is likely if you follow this package, and both are real enough to keep a small fund for. Ask your vet for a specific estimate rather than guessing.

Fun facts worth knowing

- Axolotls regenerate limbs, and also spinal cord, heart and brain tissue, without scarring. A gill filament nipped by a tank mate usually regrows.
- They have no eyelids. Dim, indirect light is not a preference, it is the condition they are built for.
- They hunt by scent and water movement rather than sight, which is why a worm offered by tongs works better than food dropped anywhere in the tank.
- The species is Critically Endangered in its only native home, the Xochimilco canal system in Mexico City, while millions live in tanks and research colonies worldwide.
- A glass or mesh lid is not decoration. An axolotl can get itself out of an open tank.

SECTION 01

Where axolotls are legal

Six outright bans, three permit states, three conditional yeses, and one myth that outlived its own repeal.

JURISDICTION	STATUS	BASIS
California	Banned	Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14, section 671 lists genus <i>Ambystoma</i> as a detrimental restricted species. No pet permits are issued.
New Jersey	Effectively banned	State environmental protection guidance lists axolotls among species that may not be kept as pets or sold. Permits are not issued for hobby purposes.
Maine	Permit, not issued for pets	12 M.R.S. section 12152. The unrestricted amphibian list is frogs and toads only, and the list's conservation-status footnote would catch this species in any case: the axolotl is IUCN Critically Endangered.
Wyoming	Banned	Chapter 69 section 8(a) says a permit "shall not be issued" for injurious wildlife listed in 50 CFR 16, and the 2025 rule put genus <i>Ambystoma</i> there. It forecloses a permit rather than offering one.
Alabama	Banned	Bars possessing any amphibian listed as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act, so the January 2025 federal rule moved Alabama automatically.
Vermont	Permit, not issued for pets	Salamanders and newts are unrestricted as a group and then the whole genus <i>Ambystoma</i> is clawed back onto the Restricted list.
Massachusetts	Permit always required	The class-wide amphibian clearance is subject to a categorical bar on IUCN-listed species, and this one is Critically Endangered.
Rhode Island	Allowed, conditionally	Section 3.7(H) treats it as an exotic amphibian: lawful to keep as a pet, but indoors only and in a way that prevents escape. Importing is limited to licensed pet shops and researchers.
Minnesota	Allowed, conditionally	Section 97A.401, subd. 8 makes salamanders protected wild animals as a whole category. One may be kept as a pet only if it came from a permitted breeder or was held before August 1, 2021. No breeder permit is visibly issued, so the condition is real on paper with its machinery not in place.
Arkansas	Unclear	The unrestricted captive wildlife list has no amphibian section at all, so a non-native salamander is neither exempted nor addressed. Note separately that 50 CFR 16.14 bars bringing any <i>Ambystoma</i> across a state line.
Hawaii	Allowed, conditionally	Named on the List of Conditionally Approved Animals, so import and possession are allowed subject to Department of Agriculture conditions. A rare yes from Hawaii.
Washington, DC	Banned	D.C. Code section 8-1808(j)(1) permits seven categories of household pet. The reptile category is snakes, fish and turtles, and no amphibian appears anywhere on the list.
New Mexico	Banned	Fifteen <i>Ambystoma</i> are on the Director's Species Importation List and the axolotl is not among them, so the default clause designates it group IV. Group IV importation is barred to the general public.

VIRGINIA IS LEGAL, AND HAS BEEN SINCE 2021

BeastVibe Virginia is still listed as a ban state across a surprising number of hobbyist sites and forum posts. Since August 1, 2021 it has been legal to import, export, sell and possess axolotls there with no

Amphibian Care Package