Chubby Frog / Asian Painted Frog Care Guide

Kaloula pulchra

Deep burrowing substrate, moist refuges, clean shallow water and controlled feeding are central to care. This frog spends much of its time hidden and should be treated as an observation animal.

Species Profile

Common name: Chubby Frog / Asian Painted Frog

Scientific name: *Kaloula pulchra*

Adult size: 2-3 in (5-8 cm) snout-to-vent length

Average lifespan: 8-10 years

Native range: South and Southeast Asia; verify locality and captive origin

Habitat and activity: Mostly nocturnal and burrowing; seasonally moist terrestrial habitats

Diet: Small varied cultured insects and suitable earthworms

Care difficulty: Intermediate

Shopping List

- Secure enclosure at least 24 × 18 × 18 in (61 × 46 × 46 cm; L × W × H) for one adult; see Housing for exceptions and group arrangements.
- Digital thermometers for different zones; a suitable hygrometer; timer for a consistent day/night cycle.
- Species-appropriate substrate and multiple stable hides or covered retreats.
- Reliable supply of the staple foods described below, clean feeding tools and a transport container.
- Appropriate overhead heat source if required, controlled by a compatible thermostat; infrared thermometer for surfaces.
- Appropriate visible lighting and, where recommended below, a linear UVB fixture with measured shade and exposure zones.
- Amphibian-safe conditioner that treats both chlorine and chloramine, powder-free disposable gloves, and an amphibian-appropriate supplement.

Housing

Our recommended starting adult enclosure is 24 × 18 × 18 in (61 × 46 × 46 cm; L × W × H) for one animal. Larger usable space is encouraged. These dimensions are a husbandry recommendation, not a species-specific experimentally proven threshold.

Provide multiple hides across the warm-to-cool and moist-to-drier gradient, covered travel routes and species-appropriate burrowing or low climbing structure. Fix heavy decor to the floor before adding loose substrate so digging cannot undermine it.

Juveniles may use a furnished adult enclosure when food intake, hydration and waste can be monitored. A temporary grow-out enclosure should still offer choice and cover. Quarantine newcomers separately with dedicated tools and a substrate that permits health monitoring; arrange veterinary assessment for unknown-origin animals.

Lighting & UVB

Provide roughly 10-12 hours of visible daylight followed by darkness. A measured UV Index (UVI) around 0.3-0.7 at the most exposed usable site, declining to near zero inside retreats, is our conservative starting recommendation. Species-specific optimal UV doses are not established for these frogs; low exposure is optional only when substantial shade and safe temperatures can be maintained.

Measure exposure at the animal's back height with an appropriate UVI meter, such as a Solarmeter 6.5. Lamp percentage, wattage and a fixed distance alone do not establish exposure: reflectors, mesh, perch height, plant growth and lamp age change output. Keep glass/plastic out of the UV path, follow fixture safety instructions and provide complete shade. Replace or reassess lamps according to measured output and manufacturer guidance.

Heating & Temperature

- Warm retreat / local air: 78-82°F (26-28°C).
- Cool-zone air: 72-76°F (22-24°C).
- Nighttime air: 68-74°F (20-23°C) for healthy established animals.

Create the gradient on one side rather than heating every hide to the same temperature. Use a compatible thermostat on each heat source; a manual lamp dimmer does not replace thermostatic protection. Secure the probe and verify temperatures independently: probe thermometers measure air/retreat temperature, while an infrared thermometer measures exposed surfaces.

Use appropriately guarded overhead warmth when needed. Keep animals clear of hot fixtures, avoid heat rocks, and switch visible lights off at night. Night heat is needed only when the room falls below the appropriate range; use a thermostat-controlled lightless source if necessary.

Humidity & Ventilation

60-80% ambient; damp lower substrate with a less wet surface. Treat readings as a starting pattern rather than a number to chase regardless of substrate, airflow or animal behavior.

Measure humidity in a representative occupied zone, away from a freshly sprayed surface. Provide sheltered moisture choices while retaining airflow. Persistent condensation, sour odor, flooded soil or surfaces that never dry indicate a setup problem. Ventilation and hydration must be adjusted together rather than simply sealing all vents.

Water & Hydration

Use clean water conditioned for both chlorine and chloramine, or an appropriate mineral-balanced amphibian-safe supply. Standing tap water does not reliably remove chloramine. Unremineralized distilled/RO water should not be the routine soaking or drinking supply; mineral-free misting systems require attention to the animal's full water exposure.

Refresh any dish daily and immediately after contamination. Provide easy exits and water shallow enough for the animal to rest with its head above the surface. Keep the substrate free of stagnant standing water.

Substrate

Deep substrate is a welfare requirement for this species, not just a humidity tool. Use 5-6" or more of pesticide- and fertilizer-free soil-based material that stays soft enough to burrow into. A practical mix is organic topsoil with coco fiber and a modest amount of washed play sand; bioactive mixes also work well when drainage is adequate.

Top the surface with clean hardwood leaf litter. Avoid cedar, pine, aromatic mulches, sharp gravel, calcium sand, reptile carpet, and loose long-fiber sphagnum as the main feeding surface. Paper towel is useful for quarantine or medical observation but does not allow normal burrowing and should not be the permanent substrate for a healthy adult.

Food & Feeding

Chubby frogs are insectivores with a strong natural bias toward small invertebrates. Field diet studies repeatedly find ants and termites among the most frequently consumed prey, along with beetles, cockroaches, and other arthropods. In captivity, do not try to recreate that diet with wild ants or termites; they may bite, sting, carry pesticides, or introduce parasites.

Use a varied rotation of cultured feeders such as crickets, small roaches, black soldier fly larvae, small earthworms/nightcrawlers, silkworms, and appropriately sized mealworms. Prey should generally be no wider than the distance between the frog's eyes. Gut-load feeder insects for 24-48 hours when appropriate.

Juveniles: small meals daily or every other day while growing. Adults: a moderate meal about every 3-5 days is a reasonable starting point, adjusted to body condition, season, and activity. Feed mainly in the evening. Do not power-feed simply because the frog accepts food; obesity is a disease in amphibians and can be difficult to recognize in an already round species.

Supplements

Use an amphibian-appropriate calcium/multivitamin program containing suitable preformed vitamin A, following the product’s labeled schedule and specialist guidance. Many feeder insects are calcium-poor; varied prey alone does not guarantee a balanced captive diet.

Coordinate calcium, D3, vitamin A and UVB rather than stacking several products. Potency varies between brands, so a universal dose in scoops or days is misleading. Keep supplements fresh, store as directed and do not use high-dose vitamin A to treat suspected deficiency without veterinary assessment.

Decor & Enrichment

Enrichment for a fossorial frog is mostly about choice. Deep soil, leaf litter, multiple covered retreats, plants, cork, moisture gradients, and varied prey allow normal digging, hiding, foraging, and seasonal behavior. Leave some open feeding space but avoid a bare enclosure.

Because these frogs can climb better than their shape suggests, low sturdy branches, cork tubes, or broad plant leaves can be offered, but avoid tall hard structures that create a fall risk.

Handling & Behavior

Limit handling to necessary maintenance or health checks. Use clean powder-free disposable gloves moistened with amphibian-safe water and support the whole body. Avoid oils, soaps, lotions and squeezing. A suitable cup is often safer for transfers.

Do not pull a buried frog out merely to make it visible. Frequent hiding alone is not proof of illness, but hiding plus weight loss or other changes needs assessment.

Cleaning & Routine Maintenance

Daily: check the animal's access to water/appropriate moisture, temperatures, visible condition and equipment. Remove feces, contaminated material, dead feeders and spoiled food promptly.

Regularly: clean dishes and feeding surfaces, check thermostats and probes, inspect decor stability and maintain ventilation. Bioactive systems still require waste checks, food removal, plant care and drainage maintenance; they are not self-cleaning.

Record appetite, activity, shed history and weight or body condition when safe. Arrange veterinary assessment for unexplained changes. Quarantine new animals with dedicated tools, and disinfect only with a suitable product used at the label dilution/contact time, then rinse and dry as required before return.

Cohabitation

Individual housing is the safest routine default. Shared housing can cause food competition, injury or reproductive pressure even without obvious fighting. Never assume a male/female pair or female group is compatible. Breeding introductions belong in a planned specialist program with separate backup enclosures and individual monitoring.

Shedding & Seasonal Changes

Skin shedding can be normal, and frogs may eat shed skin. Persistent abnormal skin, wounds, weakness or redness need assessment. Do not peel skin, force a soak or use home treatments on amphibian skin.

Dry or cool conditions can trigger dormancy/estivation-like behavior. Do not deliberately dehydrate or cool a pet to induce it. Prolonged dormancy, weight loss or poor condition requires a husbandry review and amphibian-experienced veterinary advice.

Common Health Concerns

- Poor body condition or feeding decline: check the full gradient, hydration and food quality; arrange assessment for persistent refusal accompanied by weight loss.
- Calcium/vitamin imbalance: weakness, tremors, a soft or misshapen jaw or abnormal limbs require veterinary assessment; extra high-dose supplements are not a substitute for diagnosis.
- Skin, shed or injury problems: repeated retained skin, wounds, swelling or abnormal discoloration deserve prompt attention.
- Respiratory or systemic illness: labored/open-mouth breathing at rest, marked lethargy, loss of balance, persistent diarrhea or rapid deterioration require an experienced exotic veterinarian.
- Abnormal red patches, sores or bloating can indicate serious disease, including bacterial infection; "red leg" is not a reliable home diagnosis. Do not apply reptile creams, oils, honey or undosed medications to the skin.

- Difficulty capturing prey can occur with several conditions, including vitamin A deficiency. Obtain veterinary assessment rather than treating with concentrated vitamin A.