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Axolotls belong to the amphibian group and originate from the high-altitude freshwater lakes of Mexico. Sadly, they are now included on the CITES endangered species list. The incredible regenerative abilities and large robust embryos of the axolotl have led to its widespread use in laboratory research.

flow as this can cause severe stress in axolotls. It is also not advised to keep plants in the tank as they will be readily and rapidly destroyed. Over-filtration is also a potential cause of stress and filtration must therefore be controlled. Care should be taken to keep the tank in a quiet, vibration free area.

The optimum environmental temperature for axolotls is 16-18°C and should never exceed 24°C. The ideal water pH is 7.4-7.6. Chlorine, found in tap water, is harmful to axolotls and so either a de-chlorinator must be used, or the water must be left to stand for 24 hours before adding it to the tank, to allow the chlorine to diffuse out of the water. If you live in an area in which chloramines are added to the water, then a de-chlorinator is essential. 10-20% of the water should be changed every week although this can be altered depending on the filter system of the tank and results of water quality testing.

Various substrates can be used for the bottom of the tank, however sand is the best choice as axolotls can occasionally eat gravel which can cause a fatal obstruction. Hides such as caves and pipes are recommended to allow axolotls to retreat out of sight.

Axolotls do not require strict lighting and are actually very sensitive to sudden changes in lighting and to UVB radiation, so tanks are often left unlit. This is another reason for not choosing live plants to decorate the tank.

After setting up a tank for axolotls, it should be left empty to mature for 2 weeks before any animals are added.

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Axolotls are carnivores and will eat live or dead prey, although the movement of live prey helps to stimulate them to feed, especially when young. Axolotls can be hand fed to make them more social, especially since the rudimentary teeth of the axolotl means that whilst they may bite, their teeth can rarely pierce human skin.

Water based food should be taken from fish-free water since they can be a source of disease. Adult axolotls can be fed earthworms, bloodworms, blackworms, salmon pellets and brine shrimp.

Daphnia are good for larval axolotls. Juveniles can eat whiteworms and aph5nT43(n)3(II)-30(wo)-7(r)12(m)-4 re