



The history of an axolotl

WHAT IS AN AXOLOTL?

An axolotl is an amphibious species that spends its entire life in water. Unlike many other species of Salamander, the axolotl will not naturally metamorphose to a terrestrial animal. This makes them unique amongst captive kept salamanders due to the habitat required to keep them. This is very similar to that required by fish. Axolotls also keep their external gills and paddle like tail.

Axolotls kept in captivity generally live for around 10 to 15 years and grow to an average of 10 inches in length (although larger species have been known).

Adult males will develop a distinctive bulge around their vent (just behind the rear legs) whereas females do not.

WHERE DO AXOLOTLS ORIGINATE FROM?

Axolotls are native to Mexico and are found in lake Xochimilico and its branching waterways.

Growth and development around Mexico city has resulted in a major loss of habitat for these wonderful creatures leaving them critically endangered, with only an estimated 50 to 1000 adults still in the wild.

The Aztecs once revered Axolotls, linking them to their deity Xolotl, a lightning and fire god who ushered the dead to the afterlife. They believed Axolotls shared Xolotl's shape shifting powers, giving these animals major importance in their culture.

Axolotl's were first introduced to Europe by travellers from Paris and it is believed that all descendants now in captivity originate from these. This is why breeding must be done in a controlled manner due to the lack of a wide gene pool and inbreeding which could result in deformities and serious health issues.