Paddletail Newt

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Paddletail Newts are often mistakenly sold in pet stores as Firebelly Newts, but they are a completely different species. There are two main species of Paddletail Newts - *Pachytriton labiatus* and *Pachytriton brevipes*. Both are completely aquatic and highly aggressive, and their care is very similar.

Species Profile: Paddletail Newt	
Scientific Name:	*Pachytriton labiatus, Pachytriton brevipes*
Natural Environment:	Central and Southern China
Average Size:	6" to 7"
Average Life Span:	Unknown, but at least 10 years in captivity.
Appearance:	All species of Paddletail Newts have stout bodies, smooth skin, and a large flattened head. Their tail is laterally compressed and broad and rounded at the end. They have short stubby legs and toes. *Pachytriton labiatus* (the more commonly seen Paddletail Newt in the US) has a dark brown body with a mottled brown and red or brown, red, and white abdomen. The red can range in color from true red to orange. They can also have a row of red spots or stripes along the side of their bodies and tails. Males that are ready to breed will have bold white spots on their tails. *Pachytriton brevipes* (seen most often as pets in Europe) has

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a medium brown body with black spots. The abdomen can have spots or patches of pale yellow or orange. You may see pale white spots on the tails of males that have reached the breeding age.

Habitat

Size: Minimum of 10 gallon aquarium for one newt.

Lighting: Paddletail Newts need no special lighting.

Water Temperature: Paddletail Newts need cold water, so the best water temperature range is 50° to 65°F. They can stand temperatures up to 72°F, but only for short periods of time.

Housing: Paddletail Newts are fully aquatic, so they will need at least 5 to 10 gallons of water per newt. A good filtration system is very important to keep the water clean, aerated, and moving. Canister, box, submersible, and undergravel filtration systems all work well. The system should be set up in such a way as to create flowing water within the tank. 10% to 20% of the water should be changed weekly.

Decorations are fairly minimal, but you will need at least one hiding spot per newt. Good hiding spots include PVC pipe, aquarium or terrarium decorations, and clay flowerpots. You will also need to create visual barriers and sightline breaks using aquatic plants, rocks, and other items. Some of the accessories should be set up in such a way as to provide still areas of water for your newt to rest in.

A full land area is usually not necessary, but you may need it if you are housing a pair or a group and one newt is excessively territorial. However, we do recommend that you have one or more rocks that protrude above the surface to provide a place to get away and rest briefly.

Substrate: Fine sand or large pieces of gravel that are too big for the newt to ingest.

Diet/Feeding: Paddletail Newts need a varied diet consisting of worms (earthworms, waxworms, black worms, bloodworms), insects, fish, dry food pellets, and other meat sources. All food should be small, or cut up into smaller pieces, to prevent fighting over large pieces. Remove any uneaten food promptly to keep the water clean. You can put live food in the tank or hand feed them.

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Behavior/Interaction:	Paddletail Newts are highly aggressive and territorial, even with Paddletail Newts of other species, and they should be kept in single species pairs or groups only if you have a very large tank with numerous hiding spots and visual barriers. They tend to be most aggressive during feeding times and breeding season. If you see them fighting or one of them has marks from fighting, we recommend housing them separately.
Interesting Facts:	These newts can never be kept with other species, not even other Paddletail Newt species, as they will attack and possibly kill them. Constant biting of another Paddletail Newt's tail is a form of aggression. Male Paddletails prefer plump females to thin ones, and may attack thin ones.

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