

## **Poison Dart Frogs - not so much a rescue as an unexpected gift**

Once again, I put pen to paper to tell the tale of one of our rescue animals. In fact it's a tale which starts with a rescue of three animals but then got well out of hand very quickly.

So, on to dart frogs. Like most other amphibians, poison dart frogs start life as an egg which, when it develops into a tadpole, is carried by either the mother or father to some water where it can develop.

It's no wonder we have always been fascinated by poison dart frogs, exotic, beautifully coloured and dangerous 😊

### **The beginning**

I'd been talking to a mate of ours, Carl, who I've mentioned a number of times during the series on rescue pets, and we were discussing the most poisonous animals he had seen and handled. What I hadn't realised until then was that there was a poison dart frog called Terribilis, or sometimes the Golden Poison Dart Frog which is considered one of the most toxic animals on Earth.

Apparently, so Carl informed me, a single fully grown frog has enough venom to kill ten grown men. The frog is indigenous to Colombia where locals have spread the tip of their blowgun darts with its venom for.

Ever since I started traveling in Central America and been told that the chirping, I could hear in my hammock at night wasn't insects but loads of small frogs, I'd been fascinated by them.

I thought nothing more about the conversation, until the next time I visited him in his shop. No prizes for guessing what happened next!

### **An unexpected gift**

Calling in to Carls to pick up some frozen rodents after work one day, he approached with a bigger smile even than usual. I should really have known at that point!

He was looking so pleased with himself and couldn't wait to pull me behind the counter to show me "something amazing". In one way he was right. He had a small 'critter keeper', a small plastic box used to temporarily house and transport a variety of critters. Taking the lid off he encouraged me to look inside, three Terribilis poison dart frogs!



**We're all going to die.**

They were a present he explained. As I'd been so enthusiastic when we were discussing them a couple of weeks before. Fortunately my wife Chris has a thing for frogs too and we've had quite a number of tree frogs and, even frogs which are so big they eat mice – you may remember Shoddy and Baldrick. However, the thought of broaching the subject of bringing home one of the most toxic animals on Earth was a tad daunting to say the least.

### **It's OK we're not going to die after all.**

The beauty of poison dart frogs is that their toxin is not created by the frog itself but is due to their diet. Some like the Blue Poisonous Dart Frog eat highly poisonous ants in the wild. So, if they're raised in captivity and don't get access to the insects in their native habitat, they never develop venom. Phew, a possible solution.

### **She believed me!**

Thank God Chris believed me. However, just in case these pets were classified as look don't touch to any kids who came to visit 😊

That was it we were hooked and ended up with some of the biggest terrariums we've had planted with all sorts for a whole range of dart frogs to live in.



As I say we've had many over the years. in fact too many to count. Some are fairly large and can grow to 1 – 2 inches, while others have been absolutely minute.

The main problem we found was the food. It was so small that it inevitably got out and there were small any things all over the house. We even bred our own food for them at one point as we had so many!

In addition to Terribilis, there were two which stuck out for us.

The Blue Dart frog on the left, which just looked like a dart frog should do and the Alanis (below) which I often use as a screen saver.

The Alanis (below) was certainly my favourite

