

by

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The senior author has for some time had a bad conscience vis-à-vis the readers of Axolotl Newsletters. The reason is this: Some years ago it was triumphantly announced that the problem facing all students of axolotl developmental biology, the continuous supply of experimental material, had been solved in a very simple way. However, a couple of years after the publications of these news, our adult animals became sick, and most of them died in the course of a year. All the animals had the gills overgrown by fungi, but we were informed by specialists that this is a sign of weakness and disease, and not the cause of it.

We do not know what happened, but we suspect the reason being that we had been forced to share the sand filter with some colleagues who seem to believe that the filter works as efficiently when the water passes by, as when it goes through it.

18 As a consequence of this abuse of the filter, the circulating water was contaminated, evidently with bacteria pathogenic to our animals. The symptoms of the disease were curved spine, muscle spasms, superficial hemorrhage and loss of appetite.

Fortunately we ultimately succeeded in disposing a sand filter all by ourselves, containing brackish water (0.6% Mediterranean salt). Having observed that we could cure some of our sick animals by treating them with supplements of NaCl, CaCO<sub>3</sub> and tetracycline (50 mg/l H<sub>2</sub>O), the choice to keep brackish water was not difficult. This medium may have an inhibiting effect on the bacteria involved, and it contains the substances necessary for keeping the integument in good shape, as well as for the mineral demands of the axolotls. This brackish water now circulates between the sand filter and the aquaria. Our stock of axolotls is now about 300 individuals, half of that number are adults. The adults are from March 1984 and have begun to spawn spontaneously this summer. As seen from the enjoined table the supply of egg has regularly been 1-2 clutches per week since then. Considering that this is the time of the year when most axolotlogists are inactive in the experimental field, because of lack of experimental material, we think that it is a very fine record. We have found that spawning is most successful if males and females are kept together in their normal milieu. The otherwise recommended exposure to cold-chocks has not been efficient.

We do not know what the future will bring, but should anything important happen, one way or the other, we will inform the readers of Axolotl Newsletter.

Table 1.

Spawnings in the axolotl colony

during 12 weeks (85-08-12 -- 85-10-31)

Number of spawnings	23
Average/week	1.9
Number of females involved	20