Axolotl Care at Indiana University Northwest

Timothy Stabler
Department of Biology
Indiana University Northwest
Gary, IN 46408

At Indiana University Northwest, about two dozen animals are in the axolotl colony at present. Eight of these are proven breeders, and the remaining are from 1995 spawnings. In the present building, care was taken to have all animal care facilities in one location.

The main animal care room is in the shape of an "L" with the long leg measuring about 8 feet by 30 feet and the short leg measuring about 9 feet by 14 feet. In the long leg are two racks to hold cages for warm-blooded animals. These racks have been modified so that each rack shelf is considered an animal room, and each is connected to an air vent leading outside the building. In fact, a different species can be placed on each shelf and still be in excellent shape for anyone's inspection. Such a facility allows the remainder of the room to hold a rack with the axolotl containers on it. In the elbow of the "L" is a large sink and work area, which is used for the warm-blooded animals. At the end of the "L" is a storage room measuring about 10 feet by 10 feet. Tall storage racks on each side hold mouse food, cages, shavings, axolotl bowls, and other equipment.

This large room has a Tork timer (model W202) set for 12 hours light and 12 hours darkness.

Off from the short leg of the "L" are two smaller rooms, one of which measures about 9 feet by 12 feet and the other about 9 feet by 9 feet. Each room has a door, which may be closed and locked if necessary. The smaller room has a still in it (Barnstead Fistreem II) which empties into a 30 gallon holding tank. The tank is equipped with a switch that shuts the still off when full.

The larger room has a sink and work area along one long wall with a table against the opposite long wall. On the table is a 30 gallon plastic tank with spigot (see Cole Palmer HPDE H-06317-71). Distilled water and salts to make a 50% Holtfreter's solution are kept in this tank and used for axolotls, regardless of age. The rack with the axolotls is moved from the larger room into this room for changing and feeding. The bowls are changed in the sink and placed on the table. After the bowls have been filled with solution, the animals are fed pellet food, as used by the I.U. Axolotl Colony. The bowls are then returned to the rack and the rack returned to the larger room. The total time needed for the colony for changing and feeding is about a half-hour.

Larvae are also kept on the rack although tanks for brine shrimp are set up in the still room, where light for the brine shrimp will not bother any other animals.

The smaller rooms have their own lights not associated with the timer in the large room. It was discovered that if the solution tank were kept in the larger room, an algae problem developed with the extra light. In the smaller room with no lights on except for feeding and changing, there is no such problem.

When Biology first moved into this building about 6 years ago, the colony was about 100 animals—all adult and non-breeding. Changing and feeding took a little longer but still went smoothly with this set-up.

Maintaining Larvae

Katia Del Rio Tsonis
Department of Biology
Universioty of Dayton
Dayton, OH 45469-2320

We use 1x Holfreter's solution made in deionized water. We change the axolotls every other day, but sometimes they go from Friday to Monday without a change. We keep them in *Tupperware* containers usually at least 5 times the size of the animal. We feed them the salmon pellets from *Rangen*, but they like liver more. They are fed 3 times a week. The containers are cleaned when the water gets changed with a bleached and well-rinsed brush.

Our animals are housed on shelves in a small room with a sink. We spend about 2- 3 hours a week on maintenance depending on the number of animals and whether Holtfreter's solution needs to be made.