

Breeding Program and Assurance Colony



Houston Zoo veterinarians administer hormone injections to both female and male toads. Following injection and pairing with males, females have a 90% rate of success producing eggs within 48 hours.



Captive toads lay between 3,000 and 14,000 eggs per strand with an average of 7,200. (We know because Houston Zoo toad keepers have meticulously counted millions of eggs over the last three years!) Greenery in the tank promotes natural egg-laying behavior while also providing a medium to transport and place the eggs.

Breeding Program and Assurance Colony (continued)



Some of the most genetically valuable egg strands are reserved to become part of the Houston Zoo's assurance colony. As of this writing, the assurance colony includes 500 toads.



A few strands mature at the Zoo for other reasons – such as weather conditions making transportation and release difficult – and are released as tadpoles or toadlets. However, since pioneering the approach in 2013, mass release of eggs has been the project's primary repopulation strategy.



Pictured is NACQ1 – one of four rooms at the Houston Zoo that are home to the Houston Toad assurance colony and breeding program. Project collaborators are working to increase space at Houston and grow the assurance colony at Fort Worth Zoo.

Toad Releases and Habitat Study in Bastrop County



Since 2013, the Houston Zoo has transported the vast majority of eggs in buckets fitted with circulators to release sites at Griffith League Ranch in Bastrop County.



Eggs are placed in mesh enclosures within the pond, preventing predation at their earliest stages.

At the release site, Texas State University researchers and Houston Zoo keepers check temperature and other habitat conditions...

Education and Engagement



Community engagement and collaboration are essential components of the recovery project. The Houston Zoo and partners work with public agencies, private landowners, real estate developers, and nonprofits to protect toad habitat.