Fish Health & Disease Prevention

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The best prevention against disease is to keep your fish healthy, in a stress-free environment. A varied, proper diet, stable water temperature, good water parameters, daily observation, and appropriate stocking are a few ways to ensure healthy fish, free of disease.

Diet - Most staple diets do a very good job of providing a broad range of essential nutrients required for proper fish health. However, providing a varied diet of food appropriate for your fish, in different forms, ensures better nutrition.

Stable water temperature - Proper water temperature that remains stable is one of the most important factors influencing fish health. Sudden temperature change (as little as 3°F over a 24 hour period) is extremely stressful and can compromise their immune system. This causes fish to be susceptible to parasitic infections such as Ich. Invest in a quality heater and thermometer.

Good water parameters - Start with a properly sized filter that has been cycled, see "Keep Aquarium Water Free of Toxic Compounds." Maintaining good water quality is also very important for healthy fish. A monthly partial water change of no more than 30% reduces nitrate buildup, removes debris the filter missed, and replenishes oxygen available to fish. Test kits provide an easy way to verify good water quality. Ammonia and nitrite should be zero, and nitrate in the safe range.

Observe daily - Regular observation is necessary to make sure everything is okay. Deceased fish or filter malfunction can cause aquarium water quality to become toxic very quickly, especially in smaller aquariums. It is very important to catch and remedy these problems in a timely manner.

Adding fish - Before purchasing fish, find out how large a species will grow. In general, the maximum stocking recommendation (maximum fish load) is one inch of adult fish per gallon of freshwater. When setting up a new aquarium, start with 25% of your aquarium's capacity. Do not add any more fish until ammonia and nitrite levels return to zero.

Research - The old saying "prevention is the best form of medicine" also applies to a successful aquarium. Understand the needs of the fish you select for your aquarium. When adding new fish, choose species with compatible temperaments. This will make fish keeping a fun and enjoyable experience.

Essentials: Make it simple

- Siphon-Kleen makes it easy to clean your gravel and perform regular water changes, critical for proper aquarium maintenance and the prevention of disease.

ICH: The most common fish disease

Ich, pronounced "ick," is an external parasite often referred to as "white spot disease." Aquarium fish develop Ich due to stress or improper aquarium conditions. Most often, it is brought on by fluctuating aquarium temperatures.

The symptoms of ich can start with fish holding their fins close to their body. Progressive symptoms include fish hanging at the surface, as though it's hard to breathe, or fish trying to scratch themselves on rocks. Eventually, the parasites grow large enough to be easily visible, and fish appear to be "salted." The white spots may first appear on fins or gills but can eventually cover the entire body.

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- Marineland Visi-Therm Heater is an easy-to-use, dependable aquarium heater that will maintain water temperature and look great in your aquarium.

- Dip Test Strips are a great way to stay on top of your water quality. Strips are easy to use and read and can be used for fresh or saltwater.

Quick treatment is required to save the fish. However, prevention, in the way of proper fish husbandry including stable water temperatures, is much easier.

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