Keep Protein Skimmers Operating in Peak Condition

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skimmer maintenance

Protein skimmers are a vital tool for maintaining water quality, yet are often overlooked when it comes to regular maintenance. Skipping on skimmer maintenance can have an adverse effect on your aquarium.

Marine and reef aquarists should utilize a protein skimmer to ensure healthy water parameters. Protein skimmers remove waste products and pollutants in the aquarium generated by the living inhabitants. In addition, skimmers help:

- Maintain proper pH by preventing acidic condition due to carbon dioxide buildup.
- Improve REDOX and reduce disease-causing organisms when used with an ozonizer.
- Promote proper gas exchange and increase oxygen level for healthy inhabitants.
- Reduce nitrate and phosphate buildup to prevent aggressive algae growth.
- Improve water clarity to enhance light penetration for a brighter, cleaner, and clearer aquarium.

Without a properly functioning protein skimmer, your aquarium could suffer from a loss of water quality due to a buildup of waste products such as ammonia and nitrate. These added pollutants will make the aquarium's filtration system less effective and will compromise water quality and inhabitant health. Take the following steps to ensure your protein skimmer is working properly:

Q How can I optimize the performance of my new skimmer?

A. A new protein skimmer requires a break-in period of about 1-2 weeks before it reaches optimum performance. During this time, you will make adjustments to optimize the air-water mix.

Check the reaction chamber to make sure your skimmer is properly pushing the waste materials.

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[illegible] called skimmate, to the top. The reaction chamber should be foaming with bubbles, which trap organic waste generated by your aquarium inhabitants through a process called adsorption. The neck of the reaction chamber should be cleaned 1-2 times a week to avoid a buildup of organic matter on the sides. This buildup can act as a wax inside the chamber, inhibiting the bubbles from pushing the organic waste into the collection cup. The collection cup itself should be washed out 1-2 times a week as well to keep the cup from collecting an excess deposit of waste residue and to avoid trapping a very fishy and unpleasant odor inside.

Check the flow regulator to make sure you are not overskimming and wasting water. The flow regulator will allow you to optimize the bubble size to make your skimmer more effective.

Disassemble the inlet pipe and clean it with a bottle brush, and clear air tubes with hot water.

Inspect the hoses connecting your skimmer to make sure that the connections are tight, there are no kinks, and that all the passageways are open.

Maintain water levels to ensure that your skimmer doesn't fluctuate from pressure changes and pulls the maximum amount of waste product from the water, maximizing its efficiency.

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