Aiptasia Control Options

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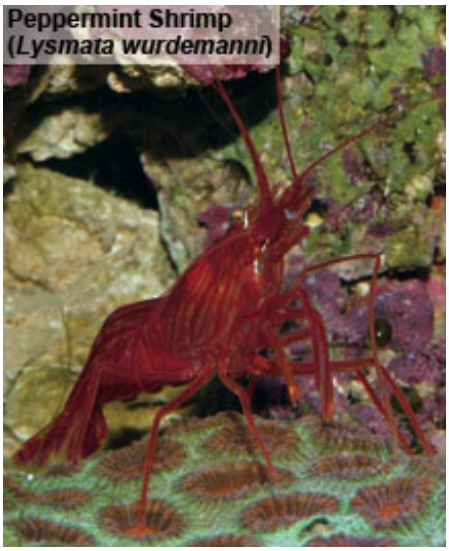
Most saltwater enthusiasts at some point in their hobby experience have had to deal with the Aiptasia anemone. In this two-part series on Aiptasia, we discuss how this hardy and survival-oriented organism is able to thrive in your aquarium and the different methods you can use for its removal.

removing the pest

Any saltwater aquarist that has had to deal with the pesky Aiptasia anemone knows first-hand how difficult it can be to rid your aquarium of the hardy survivor. But since Aiptasia won't pack up and leave on their own, it's up to you to bid them goodbye.



say goodbye to aiptasia

The first thing you can do is limit the Aiptasia's chances to thrive. Target feed your fish and corals to avoid letting the Aiptasia steal any food. Although Aiptasia contain their own energy-forming zooxanthellae, feeding them additional nutrients won't help matters.

Next, develop a plan of attack. Many hobbyists attempt to remove Aiptasia physically, but that often creates only more polyps, and thus, more problems. A safer approach is to first invest in some natural Aiptasia predators.

natural aiptasia predators

Peppermint Shrimp (*Lysmata wurdemanni*) are a popular tool against Aiptasia. Make sure that you purchase the *Lysmata wurdemanni* and not its Pacific cousins, *Lysmata Californica* and *Rhynchocinetes durbanensis*, which are less interested in Aiptasia. Keep in mind that not all Peppermint Shrimp will be interested in the anemones, either.

The Copperband Butterflyfish (*Chelmon rostratus*) is also helpful against Aiptasia, but may also pick on clams, sessile invertebrates, feather dusters, or other anemones

in the aquarium. Research the recommended conditions for keeping the Copperband Butterflyfish and Peppermint Shrimp at LiveAquaria.com before adding to your aquarium.

Although difficult to find in the hobby or keep alive in an aquarium environment, the Berghia nudibranch (*Berghia verrucicornis*) is a proven consumer of Aiptasia. They are very small (10-14 mm), nocturnal, and can take months to develop into a successful Aiptasia-eating colony, but can reduce Aiptasia populations significantly or entirely over time.

a safe, chemical approach

The safest chemical option of Aiptasia control is through the use of an aquarium-safe calcium hydroxide solution (Kalkwasser) injected into the Aiptasia polyp via a hypodermic needle or pasted onto the mouth of the anemone. Be aware that adding calcium hydroxide can increase the pH in the aquarium depending on the amount used and the water volume of the aquarium, so keep an eye on water parameters.

a safe, chemical-free approach

One chemical-free way to control Aiptasia is to inject scalding hot RO water into the polyp with a hypodermic needle. The hot water effectively kills the Aiptasia. Lemon juice may also be used to inject the Aiptasia.

Part one in this series introduced Aiptasia, and explained how they survive in your tank.