



## Fish First Aid

Thankfully it is very rare that fish will experience direct trauma (such as an open wound) instead you are looking for any signs of disease and what could be causing the problem. This handout will cover the most common ailments of ornamental fish.

### **Nearly all health problems of ornamental fish are caused by an underlying stress factor such as:**

#### Poor Water Quality

- Water needs to be the correct pH
- Ammonia and Nitrite levels should always be at or near 0 (zero)

#### Inappropriate Water Temperature

- Water temperature should be monitored daily
- Temperature needs to be maintained at the appropriate level for the species of fish. For most tropical fish this means 25°C
- Drop in water temperature commonly results in white spot disease

#### Poor Fish Introduction Procedures:

- Fish need time to acclimatise to a new aquarium gradually
- They need to adjust to differing temperatures and water quality

#### Inappropriate Tank Mates:

- Fish will eat others that they can fit in their mouth
- Keep in mind how big each species will grow
- Many species of ornamental fish are also territorial



### **Common symptoms of illness or injury in ornamental fish include:**

#### Jumping Out

- ALL fish jump so every aquarium should have a lid
- Fish will usually survive if not killed from initial impact
- **MUST** be returned into the tank immediately to prevent the gills from drying out
- **ALWAYS** wet your hands before handling a fish or you will damage the slime layer and increase the risk of infection

#### Gasping (mouthing at the surface of the water)

- Most fish do this from time to time but if fish start to do it most of the time then there is a problem
- The fish are trying to gain extra oxygen so there is either something wrong with the water quality or the fish itself:
  - Ammonia in the water – this stops the fishes' gills from effectively absorbing oxygen. If a water test shows too much ammonia then you will need to do a partial water change and check the tank for any dead fish and/or reduce the feeding and amount of fish in the tank
  - High water temperature – warmer water holds less oxygen than





cooler water so you will need to check the temperature and adjust it accordingly

- Poor water circulation – this will cause low levels of dissolved oxygen in the water. You will need to make sure the tank filter is working correctly

#### Flicking

- Looks like the fish is scratching themselves repeatedly on rocks, plants and other aquarium décor.
- This can often be a symptom of a parasitic infection such as white spot
- It can also be caused by ammonia poisoning so always test the ammonia levels in the water

#### Lethargy

- Fish that are not active or feeding are usually suffering from poor water quality
- Firstly check the temperature of the water as low temperatures can often be the cause
- Next check the pH and other parameters



#### Open Wounds

- Usually caused by aggression from other fish so make sure you separate the fish from the aggressor
- Healthy fish in good water will often heal wounds without treatment in a surprisingly quick time
- There are medications available if they need to be administered

#### White Spots

- This is a parasitic disease that causes white spots on the fish's skin and fins
- This is the most common disease of ornamental fish and pet stores will have cures

#### White Cotton Wool Growths

- This is a fungal infection that will appear on a wound site caused by injury or by another infectious disease
- The fungus is easily treated with treatments from pet stores
- Salt can also be used to treat fungus but you must be very careful as to which species will be able to handle the increase in salinity



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