PET

MOON JELLYFISH

Jellyfish (Aurelia aurita) make fascinating pets!

Jellyfish have no brain, heart or bones although some have eyes and can even see a full 360 degrees and in colour!

Jellyfish have existed in oceans for millions of years, even before the time of the dinosaurs. Although commonly known as a Jellyfish, they are actually invertebrates and belong to the same phylum as corals, scientist refer to them as 'Jellies'.

A Jellyfish has a smooth, bag-like body consisting of protein and water with tentacles armed with tiny, stinging cells. They can range from the size of a pinhead to 2 mtrs in diameter! Their mouth is located in the centre of it's body and this orifice also doubles as its bottom, so it eats and excretes from the same place! They also propel themselves forward by squirting water out of this area.

They are found throughout the world's oceans in deep water and around the coastlines in both cold and warmer temperatures. The most common colour of a jellyfish is clear but there are some species that are have vibrant colours such as blue, pink, purple and yellow.

What do Jellyfish eat?

Jellyfish can feed in two ways; via photosynthesis in the same way as a plant would utilise



light to produce it's own food and non-photosynthetic or prey feeders.

Moon jellyfish are non-photosynthetic feeders.

The diet of a prey feeding jellyfish consists of the tiny larval stage of fish, shrimp, crabs and plants. Jellyfish use stingers on their tentacles to stun and disable their prey.

They digest their food very quickly because they couldn't float about if they were weighed down by a stomach full of slowly digesting food.

How long do jellyfish live?

Most jellyfish including Moon jellyfish live for less than one year, although some of the tiny species may only live for just a few days.

There are different stages to a jellyfish's life cycle but the one that most of us are familiar with is the stage where it swims around with tentacles billowing below. This is known as the medusa stage.

During this stage, jellyfish reproduce and form thousands of very small larvae called planulae. These settle on the bottom of the ocean floor and form small polyps that look similar to a tiny sea anemone.

These then bud off and many baby jellyfish called ephyrae develop and quickly grow into the adult medusae.



The collective term for a group of jellyfish is known as a "smack".



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Keeping Moon Jellyfish in aquariums

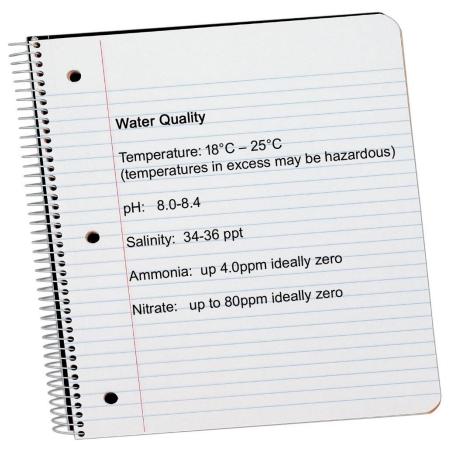
Aquariums that encourage a circular water movement without corners are essential as jellyfish can become jammed or trapped. Care should be taken when introducing or moving your jellyfish as using a net will damage them. It is recommended to use a plastic bag with some water and to ensure the jellyfish always remain in water.

Moon Jellyfish do not require aeration as air can become trapped under the animal causing it to float resulting in an inability to feed.

Ongoing care of your jellyfish

Moon jellies are relatively easy to keep and have a life expectancy of approximately 12 months (in the wild and in captivity).





Jellies require stable water conditions so you should regularly test the water and carry out frequent partial water changes of about 2-3 litres per week.

Water should be made up with a commercial marine salt mix (available in store) and left to stand for 24 hours prior to using it in the aquarium. You should also ensure that its water parameters are the same as those in the aquarium including temperature, salinity and pH. Over time water can evaporate and if you are replacing evaporated water remember the salt has not evaporated so it is essential to use tank or dechlorinated tap water.

Feeding

It is important that food remains in suspension in the water as jellyfish are passive filter feeders. A jellyfish frozen food is available that remains in suspension when the water flow is adequate. It is best to feed tiny amounts several times a day and if food ends up on the bottom of the aquarium it is an indicator that the fish are being overfed and it should be removed to maintain water quality in the aquarium.