DISTRIBUTE IN ADVANCE

Special Requirements for Care of Fish

Although these special requirements apply to anyone designated to care for fish, production is always ultimately responsible for the well-being of any animal (or human) on a set.

Guideline Applicability: American Humane’s Guidelines for the Safe Use of Animals in Filmed Media apply to anyone responsible for the care of an animal, including fish.

Fish Bowl Setup: Unlike an aquarium, a fish bowl generally does not have filtration, aeration, or a heater.

   a. Buy the largest bowl your budget and space can accommodate, and wash the bowl, gravel, rock, and decorations with warm water and non-iodized salt. Don’t use soap, bleach, or glass cleaners, which may leave residues.
   b. Add room-temperature water and the proper amount of conditioners, which remove chlorine and other harmful contaminants.
   c. Let the bowl stand for an hour before adding the fish, then float the bag containing your new fish in the bowl for 10-15 minutes. Then, add an equal amount of water from the bowl to the plastic bag and float another 10 minutes. Finally, gently tip the bag and let the fish swim free.
   d. Do not buy too many fish or select fish that are too large for the bowl. Goldfish and Siamese Fighting Fish generally do well in fish bowls; many other species may not.
   e. Water in the bowl should be changed at least once per week and sometimes more often. It should appear crystal clear. Gently net fish and place in a smaller separate container with some water from the bowl. Clean bowl and all objects just as before, then add and condition new room-temperature water. Finally, replace the fish (as you did when you purchased them).
   f. Never cover the entire top of a fish bowl; oxygen must be allowed to mix with the water in the bowl.
   g. Do not keep your fish bowl in direct sunlight, as it can overheat very quickly. Ice cubes in a plastic bag can be used to cool down the water temperature if the bowl must be placed near a heat source or in direct sunlight. Watch that the temperature of the water doesn’t drop too low with the addition of ice cubes.

Freshwater Aquarium Setup: An aquarium generally has filtration, aeration and a heater.

   a. Wash the tank and all submerged equipment and decorations as described above.
   b. Install filters, heaters, air pump, and decorations. Then add water and condition with appropriate chemicals to remove chlorine and other harmful contaminants.
c. Establishing the bacterial culture is a crucial process and should not be rushed. This is known as the “conditioning period” and generally requires three to six weeks, depending on the aquarium conditions and temperatures. During this time your tank goes thru several drastic chemical changes in ammonia, nitrate, nitrite, and pH levels.

d. During this conditioning period, start by adding a few of only the hardiest fish - goldfish, barbs, and platys. Follow the process outlined above. Monitor the fish closely for signs of stress or ammonia or nitrite poisoning (lack of feeding, loss of color, clamped fins and increased respiration).

e. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT ADD ANY MEDICATIONS OR OTHER CHEMICALS INTO THE WATER DURING THE CONDITIONING PHASE.

f. It is best to add only a few fish at a time, about one or two a week, and carefully monitor water quality to make sure you are not overloading your tank. Overcrowding a tank can lead to hypoxia, where fish rise quickly to the water’s surface, gasping for air, and can have deadly consequences. Hypoxia can also occur during a filtration/aeration system malfunction or power outage, so a backup plan should be in place. You can monitor oxygen levels by using a water test kit. In the event of hypoxia, sealing your fish in a plastic bag with one-third water and two-thirds oxygen can keep your fish alive for 24 hours or more as an emergency treatment.

g. If you can’t wait, the conditioning process can be hastened by seeding your aquarium with gravel or bioballs from an already established system. You must make sure you are not introducing any parasites or other diseases into your clean tank. This process, although not always safe, can shorten the duration of the conditioning period by 9-10 days.