

Help! I've a sick fish!

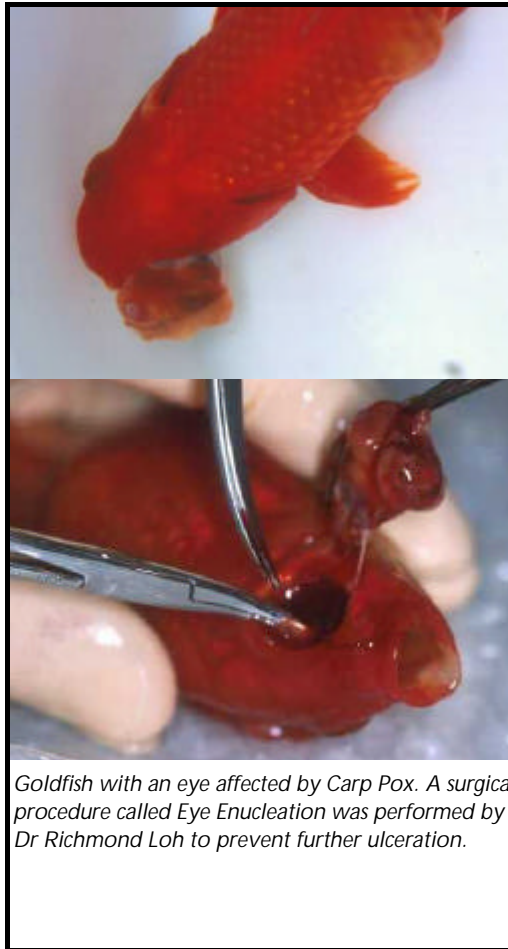
Many fish species are prey in the wild and as such, they tend to hide signs of disease very well. So, by the time the fish looks sick, it needs immediate veterinary attention.

Fish may be "piping" at the surface (gasp for air), they may be "flashing" (scratching themselves against rocks or sides of the tank), have dropsy (scales protruding), pop-eye, ulcers or abnormal growths, spots or lumps. They may be sulking in the corner, colouration turning dark or alternatively, pale and dull. They may be jumping out of the water or be swimming abnormally or in an erratic manner. Fins may be frayed or reddened. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and should only be used as a guide. If you have any suspicions of disease, consult with us.

Here is what you should do when it is decided that your fish is sick. Collect 1L of water to bring to the vet for testing. Then conduct a 40% partial water change using a gravel siphon and replace with water of the same temperature. Withhold feeding until the problem is solved and increase aeration.

If they are large fish, arrange a house call with TheFishVet. For smaller fish, catch two to five fish that appears most sick and bring them to our clinic either in a bucket or a sealed plastic bag filled a third with water and two-thirds air. Bring the extra water for testing, any medication you had recently used, your fish food and any new items you had introduced to your tank within the last month. Also, if new fish had been introduced to the tank, these should also be brought to TheFishVet.

More information is available on the TheFishVet's website.



Goldfish with an eye affected by Carp Pox. A surgical procedure called Eye Enucleation was performed by Dr Richmond Loh to prevent further ulceration.

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Basic Fish Care

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What should I feed my fish?

There are many varieties and brands of food out there and with such choices, it can be difficult to make the right choice. But even within these brands, there are so many products which are species specific. Typically, goldfish require a lower protein diet and higher in fibre. So, a purpose made koi or goldfish diet is most suitable for these fish. Most tropical freshwater fish thrive on a diet with ~45% protein. However, diets cannot be measured on this alone. It is the protein composition, different fats, carbohydrate, vitamins, minerals and ballast substances and all in the right ratios to make a good diet. Basically, you get what you pay for. Hikari, Wardley's and Tetra are a few brands that are reputable.

Many fish species have specialised dietary requirements. Some cichlids are vegetarians, so a vegetarian diet is needed for these. Many of the sucker mouth catfish are also vegetarians. Such fish can also be supplemented by adding blanched lettuce in the tank.

With regards to the types available, there are granules, sticks, floating pellets, sinking pellets, flakes and tabs. The ingredients in these may be identical, but they are presented differently to meet the needs of different fish. Floating pellets are great for larger fish and especially great in ponds where you can encourage fish to feed at the surface. Food size should be between a third to two-thirds the size of the gape of the mouth.

Flakes are a good general purpose medium to deliver food to all species. They float initially and slowly sink. However, the bottom dwellers (e.g. catfish) seldom get a chance at the food before it is all consumed. Thus, to feed bottom dwellers, a fast sinking variety is the best. Sticks, granules,

tablets and certain pellets are designed to meet this criteria.

If this is still all too confusing, TheFishVet can advise you.

How do I set up my aquarium?

The number and type of fish is dictated mainly by the ground area rather than the volume of the tank. This is so that fish can swim freely from side to side and also find hiding places or form territories. The tank should be as large as you can afford to allow fish their space and also a more stable miniature aquatic environment. More detailed advice can be found on TheFishVet's website.

What is a "Well Fish" exam?

We want to ensure that our fish patients are healthy and happy and are able to display their full array of colours and natural behaviours. We are happy to offer pre-purchase advice as to the suitability of species and special requirements. When you acquire new pet fish, we recommend a "well fish exam".

During the visit, the veterinarian will review diet, husbandry and offer advice regarding the appropriate care and needs of the species concerned and your own circumstances. A water quality test is standard.

The aquatic environment is made up of water and your fish is in intimate contact with this at all times, living, eating and sleeping. There are potential nasties that cannot be seen that can be picked up with a standard water quality test.

A physical examination will be conducted, however, this may not pick up all possible abnormalities. Depending on the veterinarian's findings and the owner's circumstances, we generally offer microscopic examination of the skin, gills and faeces.

We will recommend appropriate treatment for any abnormalities discovered. We recommend that pet fish receive a "Well Fish" check up each year and a monthly "water quality test".

Special considerations

Some fish, especially discus and other cichlids are prone to "Hole-in-the-head" disease. We recommend that these fish receive the "Well Fish Exam" every three months and an antiparasiticide against Hexamita may be indicated depending on findings.

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