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FRESHWATER TEST KITS

WHAT SHOULD I GET AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN??

Test kits are an inexpensive way of being able to monitor the health of your aquarium. A few basic tests will enable you to monitor how your aquarium water is being maintained.

In a freshwater tank the two most important test kits to have are your p.H. kit and a general hardness kit. These two kits are used on a regular basis and allow you to judge how much conditioning crystal your tank requires (hardness) and whether the water is turning acid (p.H.). The 5 in 1 test strips are a great proposition too as they include both of those tests and more.

The hardness requirement of different fish vary, with goldfish best kept at 220 ppm. And most community tanks being o.k. at around 150 – 170 ppm. Some fishes requirements are vastly different to this, so don't hesitate to ask the requirements of your fish, we'll be glad to help out. The p.H. requirements of different fish also vary, but in most cases if you maintain between 6.8 – 7.2 this will be o.k for most community situations. Most p.H. kits come supplied with adjusting agents to manipulate p.H. and products such as Seachem's Neutral Regulator can be used to lock a p.h. of 7 in place.

Other test kits that are important to consider owning are Ammonia, Nitrite and Nitrate. These kits allow you to assess whether all of the fish's waste products are being successfully broken down by the bacteria that prevent the fish from poisoning themselves. Washing of gravel, or some anti-biotic type medications can upset this process in an established tank, and in a new tank, the situation can sometimes get well out of control. (See the new tank syndrome care sheet)

Ammonia in the water, even as little as one or two parts per million, can be extremely stressful to your fish, or even lethal. Obviously from this, we want ammonia to read as a zero amount in a healthy tank. If it's not zero, then talk to us about methods of control.

Nitrite is less aggressively harmful than ammonia is, but is still very unpleasant for your fish, and again this should be a zero reading. A test result that shows either ammonia or nitrite readings should be investigated immediately, to try and determine the cause of it's presence. Checking filter efficiency and feeding levels are a good place to start. If you have trouble locating the problem, call us. We'll help.

Nitrate is the final result of the breakdown process and should not be allowed to exceed more than around 50ppm. It is far less toxic than the previous two, but when it begins to build up, it can cause problems. Water changing is usually the answer to control this, and so the nitrate kit tells you if your water change regime is keeping up with the waste that's being generated.

Test kits are generally easy to use, and the newer 5 in 1 test strips really make things easy. Testing your own water can save you a lot of heartache and lost fish. We highly recommend you get your own kits so you can keep on top of things, and be able to react to any adverse changes in your water quality. Also it's much easier to be able to walk in & say "my water is all testing out o.k. and I'd like to buy that fish please" than to have to bring in water samples in the hope that you may be able to get the fish you want.