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SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH

The Siamese fighting fish (*Betta splendens*) originates from the Malay peninsula and Thailand.

This fish is a member of the Anabantid fishes which means they have an organ located behind their head which is called a labyrinth organ. The labyrinth organ is basically a rudimentary lung which allows these fish to take a mouthful of air and extract oxygen from it. Because of this ability the fighters are in a unique position to survive in quite poor water conditions. This does not mean however that you should keep them in anything less than the best conditions you can provide. Give the fish a fifty percent water change once a week if it is being kept in a small volume of water.

TRI – START or another dechlorination agent should be used to remove the chloramine that is in our water, but the hardness level of Geelong's tap water is quite suitable for these fish.

The Fighters are found in slow streams, rice paddies and even in the flooded footprints of water buffalo and other heavy animals. Fighters prefer to have quiet and relatively confined areas to inhabit as the males are not a very sociable animal.

Having said that, the females of the species are reasonably good community fish, but they do not have the bright colours of the males. The bright coloured fish with the big flowing tails & fins are all males.

Keeping the fighters is relatively easy, as all that is required to house them is a small bowl or tank. Being a tropical fish however, they do need to be kept warm and shielded from draughts which may chill their water. Most houses which are a comfortable temperature all year round should be suitable, but try to keep the fish in the warmest room of the house, or look for appliances around the house that are constantly warm, or go into standby mode when not being used & place the fish on those.

Fighting fish come in many bright colours but the most common colours are reds and blues. The best foods for fighters are live black worm and brine shrimp, and there are also some dry foods which the fish will accept. Feeding the fish is a simple matter of giving them 3 - 5 black worms a day. The fighters are a fairly short-lived fish though, with a ripe old age for a fighter being around eighteen months to two years.

Fighting these fish is illegal in Australia and attracts up to a \$10,000 fine.