**WATER QUALITY**

This is the most important part of keeping fish! Poor water quality stresses fish and increases the risk of secondary infections.

Water changes should be done regularly – either 10% weekly or 25% every other week. Municipal water should be treated to remove chloramine prior to addition to the tank. Siphon gravel regularly to remove waste build up on the bottom of the tank. Filters should be gently rinsed in the “dirty” tank water to remove debris build up – never use chlorinated water or high pressure to rinse filters (you do not want to kill the bacteria). Once your biofilter is established you should NOT replace your filters.

Water quality parameters should be tested regularly. Keep results in a log book, this will help you to detect and correct any abnormal trends. Paper test strips are inaccurate. Reliable, liquid based kits are available OTC (ex. API Freshwater Master Test Kit, API Saltwater Master Test Kit, API Alkalinity kits). Test kit reagents should be replaced yearly.

Temperature should be kept stable within the target range for your fish species. Electronic thermometers are far more reliable than tank stickers. Keep your tank away from a/c units, heaters and windows to avoid fluctuations in temperature.

**Target Water Quality Parameters**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Parameter** | **Safe Level** | **What to do if outside of target range** |
| Ammonia | 0 ppm | Frequent water changes, reduce feeding, reduce number of fish in the tank, use water additives that bind ammonia |
| Nitrite | 0 ppm | Frequent water changes.  Add 0.1-0.2% NaCl aquarium salt |
| Nitrate | <20 mg/L | Water changes. Live plants |
| Alkalinity (KH) | >100 mg/L | Water changes, careful addition of baking soda |
| Total Hardness (GH) | >100 mg/L |  |
| pH | 6.5-8.5 | Check what the target pH is for your fish species. Changes should be made slowly.  Low pH can be corrected using baking soda. |
| Dissolved oxygen | 6-10 ppm | Add aeration, reduce feeding, reduce stocking density, reduce temperature. |
| Chlorine | 0 ppm | Dechlorinate all water before using in tank. Commercial cechlorinators are more effective at removing chloramine than aeration. |
| Hydrogen Sulphide | 0 ppm | Water changes, remove decaying material from tank (gravel vacuum etc.), aerate water, reduce water temp and increase pH |
| Salinity | Varies by species (marine vs brackish). | Use a hydrometer or refractometer to monitor tank salinity. |

**HUSBANDRY**

Choosing an appropriately sized tank, filter, heater and air supply is an important first step. An important rule to follow is: NO FISH BELONGS IN A BOWL!

* Take care not to oversotck your fish tank. As a general rule: 1 inch of total body length of fish per 5-10 gallons of tank water.
* Some species require more space than others, carefully research the tank size requirements for your species before bringing them home.
* Filter type and size will vary by tank type and species. Consult with an experienced aquarist when purchasing.
* Research appropriate feeds for your fish species carefully – purchase commercial foods in small quantities and replace at least every 6-8 months to ensure they don’t become moldy. Rotate brands and feed types. Offer food in small quantities, multiple times per day. Give the fish 3-5 minutes to eat, then remove any remaining food from the tank. Use sinking pellets for species that are prone to issues with buoyancy (ex. fancy goldfish)
* Adding new fish – always quarantine new additions in a separate quarantine tank for 2-4 weeks to avoid introducing illness to the existing fish in the tank.

Water quality is on point but your still having an issue? Contact the office to schedule an appointment.