The 10 Commandments of Fishkeeping

Category : Beginners Articles
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FK member Fishy-Fishy lists 10 things all fishkeepers must do

1. Don’t assume fish are low-maintenance
Fish take work like any other pet. You will need to do water changes, tests and take care of them when they’re sick. Don’t assume you can just chuck a couple of fish in a tank and they will be fine.

2. Do your own research!
Some shops give good advice, most don’t. In the age of the Internet there is a huge amount of information at your disposal. You should research every single purchase you plan on making from the tank and equipment to the fish. Make sure you know exactly what your fish needs, how big it will get and if it will get on with your other fish and don’t buy a fish if you’re not sure what it is.

3. Cycle your tank before adding fish
Using hardy fish such as Danios is still recommended by some shops but really, this is the 21st century and you do NOT need to use fish to cycle a tank. Do it fishlessly and save yourself and the fish a lot of stress.

4. Test the water regularly
Poor water quality equals poor fish health. Keep the water sweet and your fish will thrive. A test kit is essential and you should test the water weekly so you can sort out any potential problems before they happen.

5. Quarantine fish and equipment
Many an established tank has been wiped out by a new fish with whitespot. If you get a new fish, quarantine it for at least a week to make sure it won’t transfer any diseases to your current stock.
If you use any equipment e.g. nets in multiple tanks make sure you disinfect them. You can use salt water (with aquarium salt) or other products are available. Check the labelling for details.

6. Get into a routine
Use your water test results to see how often you need to change the water (normally once a week) and get into the habit of doing it. It’s harder to forget a water change or feeding time if its part of a routine. Your fish will soon remember when dinner time is as well!

7. Feed your fish a balanced diet
Humans wouldn’t be healthy if they ate the same thing all the time and neither would fish. While commercially available fish foods claim to be ‘complete’ it is still a good idea to feed your fish other foods such as live food and fresh vegetables. Make sure you research what your fish would eat in the wild so that you can give them the right diet.

8. Check your hardware

The good bacteria in filters can die off quickly if the filter breaks so check your equipment every day to make sure it’s working. It’s a good idea to have a back up filter that you can move the filter media to if your main filter breaks. Spare heaters and battery-powered air pumps are also good to have on stand-by.

9. Take time to watch your fish

That’s the whole point after all! Take the time to sit by their tank and appreciate their beauty. This will give the fish time to get used to you and time for you to familiarise yourself with the fish. Knowing their normal behaviour patterns will make it much easier for you to spot anything unusual that could be a sign of illness.

10. Put your fish first

You might really want that massive Arowana or a big shoal of Bala Sharks but unless you’ve got the money, the time and the space to look after the fish you want for the rest of its life then it might be better to reconsider. They are live animals after all, and they deserve to be treated with respect. Many fish have died despite the best intentions so make sure you are doing the right thing by your fish.