Holiday Tips for Fishkeepers

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GOING AWAY OVER THE HOLIDAYS?

Here are a few tips to ensure that your fish remain healthy and happy during your absence.

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FEEDING

1. Your fish should come to no harm if left without food for a couple of days, provided they are healthy. For longer periods of absence, arrange for someone to check and feed your fish.

2. If the nominated "fish minder" is not an experienced aquarist, then s/he is likely to overfeed them, with potentially disastrous consequences to the water quality. You can avoid this problem by measuring out each food ration into a small air-tight container (such as those old 35mm film canisters or small zip-seal plastic bags). For example, if the minder is happy to pop in once a day then provide one container for each day of the week and label it accordingly (e.g. "Monday", "Tuesday", etc.) Its a good idea to leave a set of emergency instructions, ideally with the phone number of an experienced aquarist or aquarium retailer who would be willing to sort out any problems (do ask their permission first !).

3. Alternatively, you could install an automatic fish feeder (from some aquatics shops). You should, however, still get someone to pop in every couple of days to check on the fish, water, and equipment.

4. Fish fry generally require frequent feeds and may die if left unattended for more than a couple of days. If you regularly breed fish (especially egg -layers) try and avoid hatching or rearing fry just before your holiday.

NEW PURCHASES

5. Avoid purchasing new fish for at least two weeks before going away. The last thing you want is a disease outbreak just as you are about to set off on your trip!

AQUARIUM EQUIPMENT

6. Timer-controlled lights can be left to operate normally during your absence. Manually operated

lights should be switched off, rather than permanently left on.

7. Do not switch off heaters, air-pumps or filters while you are away.

8. If your aquarium has a filter, check whether the filter medium requires cleaning. A clogged filter will be inefficient and this could lead to a water quality problem while you are away. A partial water change (say 20%) and a quick syphon over the gravel may also be worthwhile.

9. Two or three days before you depart, check that all the fish appear healthy and that the filter and other essential items of equipment are working properly. Don't leave these checks until the last minute otherwise you may not have the time to deal with any problems.

10. Resist the temptation to add extra food to the tank on the day of your departure. This is because any excess uneaten food may foul the water and this in turn may harm your fish.

Have a great vacation!