



CARING FOR YOUR BETTA

ABOUT BETTAS

Bettas are one of the most popular pet fish, and one of the easiest to care for. They come in a variety of colors with long sleek fins or wide crown tails, thrive in a small bowl, and make great additions to most community aquariums.

It is believed that Bettas were first discovered in Thailand over 100 years ago. In the wild, Bettas are normally found in still or very slow flowing waters with thick vegetation. In the wild, they can be seen nipping at the roots of plants to eat the small insects, crustaceans, and eggs of other fish. Because of this, it is sometimes believed that Bettas eat plants, but they are not herbivores or plants eaters.

One of the most unique features about Bettas is that they are “labyrinth fishes.” Labyrinth fishes have a unique ability to obtain oxygen from either the water or the atmosphere. To do this they periodically swim to the surface and gulp air using a special organ called the labyrinth organ, similar in many ways to our lungs. This unique feature allows Bettas to thrive in small bowls without additional air pumps.

SELECTING THE CONTAINER

Bettas can thrive in a smaller fish bowl or aquarium, but the larger the container, the better the Betta’s fins will grow and develop. If you decide on an aquarium or larger bowl, the water will need to be changed less frequently, and the Betta will have more room to swim around.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED?

A small plant, either plastic or real, in the container will help to duplicate a more natural environment for your Betta, and provides a hiding place for your fish during times of stress. You should only use decorations designed for use with fish, such as gravel, ornaments, and plants.

Purchase cleaning tools that are for aquariums to clean your fish’s container. Household cleaning products, including soap, are harmful to fish.

You’ll also need a water conditioner that will instantly neutralize the chemicals in tap water, making the water safe for your Betta. Tap water can be full of dangerous chemicals such as chlorine and chloramines that are poisonous to Bettas.

The best food is a floating pellet specially designed to meet the nutritional needs of Betta fish.

SELECTING YOUR BETTA

Bettas make a great addition to any community aquarium, provided no other male Bettas are added to the bowl or aquarium. Bettas are also known as Siamese Fighting Fish because of the aggressive behavior of males when two or more males are placed together. Males are very competitive, flaring their fins and expanding their gills to show dominance in the presence of other males. This leads to torn fins and can cause extreme damage to both of the male Bettas. You should never place two males in the same container. Male Bettas are only aggressive with other male Bettas or similar body silhouettes, and not with any other type of fish.

PREPARING YOUR BETTA'S NEW HOME

Find a location for your bowl or aquarium where it won't easily get bumped that is not in direct sunlight or near heating or cooling vents.

Rinse and clean your Betta container with tap water and aquarium cleaning tools. Clean both the inside and outside of the container, as well as the decorations you have purchased.

Prepare the water that will go into your Betta's new home. Bettas prefer a temperature of 75 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

Add the water conditioner, following the label instructions. When you add water to the container in the future, you must always condition tap water first to ensure it is safe for your Betta.

ADDING A BETTA TO A FISH BOWL OR AQUARIUM

Whenever fish are netted and handled, their protective slime coat is rubbed off. When adding new fish to any aquarium, add additional water conditioner to help relieve stress. The best method is to float the unopened bag of new fish in their new home for 10 minutes to allow them to adjust to the water temperature. Then, open the bag and gently release the fish. The bag water may contain fish waste (ammonia), so try to avoid adding the bag water to the aquarium as much as possible.

FEEDING YOUR BETTA

Feed your Betta once a day. It is best to feed only enough food that it can eat in one minute. If food is sitting on the bottom of the aquarium or bowl, the fish have been overfed. Overfeeding promotes fish waste (ammonia) that can build up to a harmful level and is one of the major causes of fish loss.

CLEANING YOUR FISH BOWL

Dirty fish bowls are unhealthy for fish. To keep your fish healthy, you should change at least half of the water in your Betta bowl or aquarium every 3-5 days. Follow these simple maintenance steps:

1. Fill a separate container with tap water that is about the same temperature as your Betta's water.
2. Add water conditioner to the tap water to remove the disinfectants that are toxic to your fish.
3. Leaving your fish in its bowl/aquarium, remove half of the old water.
4. Refill the bowl/aquarium to the usual level with the treated tap water.

Remember that this is just a guide to get you started. Consult your local fish store for more detailed advice on fish care and keeping.