

FEDERATION OF BRITISH AQUATIC SOCIETIES

Pond Care Sheet No 8:

FISH HEALTH

10/09/2003

Fish are no more prone to illness than any other animal and, like all animals, have over time evolved an immune system specific to the basic ills that afflict them. Therefore the best means of keeping fish healthy is by keeping their environment in tiptop condition, a healthy pond invariably means healthy fish.

There are however a few simple basic rules to observe.

1. Before you fill or top up a pond ensure that the water supply is suitable for fish; there is no guarantee that tap water is, The water companies are only required to supply water fit for human consumption. Not fit for fish.
2. Unless you have a serious problem it is best not to change more than 50% of the pond water at any one time.
3. Do not keep topping up a pond through evaporation without first removing some water, from the bottom of the pond if possible, around 10% a week during the warmer months and 10% a month during the winter.
4. Never treat fish or the pond with a chemical in case something may occur.
5. If you have to treat a particular fish always isolate it from the others.
A 113lt uPVC cold-water tank from a local Builders Merchant serves as a good hospital or quarantine tank. Fill with 50% pond water and then top up with a suitable tap water.
6. If you have to treat a complete pond turn off any UV units and Particle Filters. Isolate Biological filters but maintain a minimum flow of water pumping the same water around a biological filter to keep it going, or the Biomass will die.
Remove any plants that the treatment may affect; also plants and planting medium will absorb the chemical making it difficult to measure the correct dosage.
7. Do not introduce any new fish into an established pond without first keeping them in Quarantine for the period recommended by the supplier.
8. Do not treat a fish or pond without first ensuring you have correctly identified the problem or disease and before you treat, and first take steps to correct the cause of the problem.
9. The main causes of fish illness are:
Poor water quality, over crowding (too many fish), an incompatible mixture of fish, too much water turbulence, disturbance, repeatedly netting them or simply you poking about in the pond.

FEDERATION OF BRITISH AQUATIC SOCIETIES

Pond Care Sheet No 8:

FISH HEALTH

10/09/2003

FISH COMPLAINTS & ILLS

It is often difficult to tell if a fish or shoal of fishes is sick, however their general behaviour should be easy to recognise by observation and any unusual behaviour should be apparent to you, typical examples are listed **STRESS**.

Fish not feeding, fins closed and held against the body, loss of colour, lethargic or laboured movement, rubbing themselves against objects as if to remove irritants etc. If a fish is netted and held on its side, when you look over it and the eye is looking straight at you i.e., flat to the body instead of the top of the eye raised, this is a good indication that the fish is not well and a reason for this should be sought.

It is a fact that fish like all animals have their 'off days' and it may be that isolation and a simple stress treatment will resolve the problem in a day or so.

BLOOD IN FINS: See '**FIN CONGESTION**'. If necessary see '**FUNGUS**' or '**FIN ROT**'

FIN CONGESTION:

SYMPTOM: Blood streaks and clots in the finnage, usually the caudal of long-finned fishes. This will quickly turn into Fin Rot if not dealt with.

TREATMENT: Fish are being kept too cool. Raise temperature and aerate. Some fancy fish are not suitable to be kept in ponds.

Cooking Salt Bath - Trim away long infected fins (not more than a third).
Keep long finned fishes at a slightly higher temperature.

FIN ROT:

SYMPTOM: Fins fraying with the membrane between the rays rotting away, leaving a series of filaments to the fin.

TREATMENT: Potassium Dichromate - Acriflavine. You can trim away infected fins (not more than a third).

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Anti Fungus' - 'General Tonic'.

FISH LEECH & LOUSE:

SYMPTOM: Fish Leech(s) attached to the body of the fish - The same treatment applies for Fish Louse (*Argulus*).

TREATMENT: Remove the Louse by touching it with a baby bud soaked in Iodine. Try and keep the Iodine off of the fish's body. Cover the wound with Friars Balsam or Vaseline.

FUNGUS:

SYMPTOM: Clumps of white or off white cotton wool like threads usually a secondary infection associated with a wound or ulcer, and can occur on the body, fins or even on the gills.

TREATMENT: Malachite Green - Cooking Salt - Acriflavine.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Fungistop' 'Anti Fungus'.

FEDERATION OF BRITISH AQUATIC SOCIETIES

Pond Care Sheet No 8:

FISH HEALTH

10/09/2003

GILL FLUKES:

SYMPTOM: Fish are obviously ill, closed fins. Fish mouth surface even gulping air. Gill are pale, white instead of red.

TREATMENT: Methylene Blue - Potassium Dichromate.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Formaldehyde 30%.' 'Gill-Wash'.

MOUTH ROT:

SYMPTOM: Damage to mouth as the tissue is being eaten away, signs of Fungus as a secondary infection.

TREATMENT: Potassium Dichromate - Acriflavine.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Anti Fungus' - 'General Tonic'.

SKIN FLUKES:

SYMPTOM: Fish are obviously ill, twitching and/or closed fins, rubbing against objects as if trying to remove an irritant. One can often see small blood marks on the fins and/or body.

TREATMENT: Methylene Blue - Cooking Salt.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Formaldehyde 30%'.

STRESS:

SYMPTOM: Stress recognised by fish not feeding, fins closed and held against the body, loss of colour, lethargic or laboured movement.

TREATMENT: Try feeding moving live food '*Daphnia*' etc.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Revite'.

WHITE SPOT:

SYMPTOM: Many tackling pin head size white, or off-white, spots on body and fins. *Ichthyophthirius multifiliis*, a minute parasite that feeds off the body of the fish encysting itself in a small white protective coating. Has a fairly complex reproduction cycle and can be cured simply by interrupting this cycle.

TREATMENT: Isolate the victim. Raise the temperature to speed up the cycle and change all the water daily. Or treat with chemicals. Methylene Blue, Potassium Dichromate, Acriflavine.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'ContraSpot' - 'Anti Parasite'.

ULCERS:

SYMPTOM: Ulcers are an open ulcerated area on the body, sometimes infected with secondary problem usually a fungus.

TREATMENT: Cooking Salt, Acriflavine, Vaseline, and Friars Balsam.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Anti Ulcer' - 'Ulcer Swab'.

PERSISTENT ULCERS OR WOUNDS:

SYMPTOM: Ulcers or wounds that do not heal whilst in contact with water.

TREATMENT: Vaseline, Friars Balsam.

COMMERCIAL TREATMENTS: 'Anti Ulcer' - 'Wound Seal'.

DEAD FISH: If one of your fish dies DO NOT flush it down the toilet. This is one way in which fish diseases are transferred into our river systems and devastate our British native fish. Incinerate it, bury it, or put in a plastic bag in the dustbin.

FEDERATION OF BRITISH AQUATIC SOCIETIES

Pond Care Sheet No 8:

FISH HEALTH

10/09/2003

USING REMEDIES

CHEMICALS ARE DANGEROUS

1. Always read the instructions on the use of the treatment before using it - and adhere to them.
2. Handle all chemicals and treatments with care avoid spillage and splashing, wear 'Marigold' type gloves.
3. Protect your eyes from splashes with glasses or protective eye shields.
4. **NEVER** check a chemical by taste or smell. If not sure what it is do not use it and dispose of it safely.
5. Avoid breathing in any fumes.
6. Always measure or weigh out the required dosage using a graduated container or scales. Do not over or under treat, and never guess the dosage.
7. All sick fish must be isolated from the others at once.
8. All treatment must be undertaken in controlled conditions and in isolation.
9. Do not view an exposed UV tube when powered up with the naked eye it will damage the retina and can cause blindness.
10. Many chemicals will not store always keep them in the dark and in a refrigerator if possible clearly labelled and dated.
11. Last, but not least, prevention is always preferred to cure.
Quarantine fish before releasing them into a pond. Disinfect plants and examine them for snails, snail spawn and other nasties before introducing these into a pond or stream.