

# care sheet **guppies** (*Poecilia reticulata*)

**To successfully keep guppies under commercial conditions, one must follow the lead of commercial breeders.**

The wild guppy originated from South America, but nearly all guppies sold in Australia today are bred in Asia. Male guppies are raised in ponds, where they are kept in water with a relatively high total dissolved solids content. For their successful maintenance, in commercial quantities, it is important these same water conditions be copied. Most failures at keeping guppies under commercial conditions can be traced to stress, induced through incorrect water conditions.

Many shopkeepers are reluctant to copy the breeders' water conditions, on the false assumption, that eventual change to normal home tank conditions would be detrimental to the fish. The facts are, that guppies kept in shop tanks, in water very different from that in which they were raised, are stressed, become weak and have little or no hope of surviving the move to the hobbyist's tank.

Interestingly, guppies introduced into uncrowded home aquariums, where the water is well aged and there is plant life and algae to graze, can make the transition from the previously described hard water, with little or no ill effects.

In summary, for commercial conditions, treat guppies in the following manner:

- They are best kept in tanks on their own; this also applies to the sexes, keep males and females in separate tanks.
- Guppies require clean, oxygen rich water and cannot tolerate dirty or clogged undergravel filters, therefore ensure all guppy tanks are not overcrowded are well aerated and filters are cleaned regularly.
- Make sure biological filters are working properly, ensuring no ammonia or nitrite is present
- Being so active, guppies expend an enormous amount of energy and need to be fed at least 3 times a day, with a variety of foods including dry, fresh, frozen or live foods.
- A pH level of about 7.0 suits them well. Do not allow it to drop much below 6.0.
- General hardness, between 250-300 ppm. Use live bearer water conditioner as per directions.
- If you are having problems with keeping guppies try using livebearer water conditioner at double the recommended dose rate.



- Guppies enjoy a temperature of between 24°C-26°C, but if you are experiencing bacterial disease problems try keeping them cooler (about 22°C).
- They are prone to bacterial diseases, and new shipments should be treated with a preventative treatment if you are experiencing problems.
- If guppies develop columnaris disease, immediately treat with tetracycline or doxycycline (see article on columnaris diseases).

Note: The above care instructions generally apply to the keeping of other livebearers (eg. Mollies, Platies, Swordtails)

