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Caring for a goldfish

Goldfish are the most commonly kept pet in the world. They are inexpensive, easy to care for and hardy. There are many varieties and colors available, from the common goldfish to its fancy-finned cousins. With proper care they can live many years, making relaxing and decorative additions to the home.

General

Water quality is vital to the health of your goldfish. Most tap water is suitable, but check with the store to be sure about your local water. Let the water sit overnight, so the chlorine evaporates and it reaches room temperature. Once your tank is set up, remove about 1/4 of the water weekly and replace with clean water.

Housing

Don't be tempted to economize by keeping your fish in a goldfish bowl or small container. They are not suitable for a goldfish and your pet's health will decline, resulting in an untimely death. Goldfish get their oxygen from the surface of the water and the key to success is to choose a tank with as great a surface area as possible, at least 30 sq. inches for every inch of goldfish. The surface area is calculated by multiplying the length of the tank by its width. A filter will help keep the water clean and an airstone will provide extra oxygen for your fish. Add aquarium gravel on the floor and some accessories like rocks and plastic plants to make your fish feel at home.

Diet

It is best to feed a packaged fish food formulated especially for goldfish. A good quality goldfish food provides a complete diet with the correct amounts of protein, vitamins and carbohydrates essential to your goldfish's health. Goldfish food also keeps your pet's bright colors at their best. Feed your fish small amounts, several times a day. Try to feed only as much as the fish will eat immediately as uneaten food will decompose and pollute the water.

Cleaning

Place your fish tank out of direct sunlight to reduce algae growth. You can scrape any algae off the glass when replacing the water. Use a siphon tube to 'vacuum' the gravel to keep the tank free of debris, which is not only unsightly but also harmful for your fish.

Fertility

Adult goldfish can be sexed during the breeding season.

Health

Signs of illness include: constant gasping for air at the surface; rapid gill movements; difficulty swimming; lack of appetite; gray or white cottony looking spots or red patches. Dirty water is the primary cause of illness in goldfish.

Warnings

Never use any kind of detergent or soap to clean your pet's tank or accessories.

More Info

Goldfish: A Complete Introduction, by Robert Mertlich. TFH Publications