

## How to help your fish settle in peacefully.

It is important to introduce your new fish to your aquarium or pond carefully and acclimatise them slowly to any differences in temperature or water chemistry. This will minimise the stress of 'moving home' as well as reducing the risk of disease and illness.

**The journey home** needs to be as short as possible so they don't get too warm or cold, and so the quality of the transport water doesn't deteriorate. Carry them in a dark bag or box and secure it in the car so they don't slosh around.

**Acclimatising:** When you get home, float your fish in the polythene bag in your aquarium or pond for **10 minutes**. Next, cut the knot off the bag and roll down the sides so that it can float on the surface with the top open. Dunk the bag **every 10 minutes** so that some of your water flows into the bag and mixes with the water in the bag. This means you are gradually diluting the water the fish are used to with the water in their new environment. After 30 minutes gently tip the bag so the fish can swim out.

**First few hours** In an aquarium it is best to leave the tank lights off while the fish are acclimatising and for a few hours afterwards as they will feel safer and more relaxed in the dark.

**First few days** Don't be surprised if your new fish want to hide or refuse to feed for the first few days as they will need time to 'settle in'. Having plenty of plants and ornaments will make them feel safe and help them to settle in more quickly. Try to leave them in peace while they build their confidence—being stirred around with a fishing net twice a day so you can do a head count will make them want to hide even more!

**Water Quality** Bear in mind that every time you add new fish, you are adding to the workload on your filter. If you had 5 fish and add 5 more, you have doubled the workload. Minimise the risk of this affecting your water quality by adding a dose of filter bacteria every day for the first week after adding new fish. Test the ammonia, nitrite and pH regularly, especially if you notice any signs of fish health or behaviour changing.

**Drama and Bullying** It is totally normal for fish to guard territories against new arrivals in their tank—think how you'd feel if a group of strangers suddenly moved in to your house! The best way to avoid this happening is to rearrange the décor/aquascape and add a load of new plants just before you release the new fish, so your older fish are kept busy exploring their new layout and don't focus on the new additions. You may see your original fish rushing at new fish or trying to intimidate them by flaring their fins out. A bit of chasing and posturing is normal and nothing to worry about. If it goes on more than 24 hours or turns into physical damage and/or causes a fish to hide rather than coming out for food, you may need to intervene. Ideally, catch the bully and put it safely in a fish bag with some of the tank water in an insulated box, out of sight of the aquarium for an hour. If you then rearrange the aquarium layout and reintroduce the bully, things should calm down. If not, you may need to separate them and rehome one—you can always bring fish in to the shop if the drama continues.



Got questions? Talk to us!



harrogate\_aquatic@hotmail.co.uk



@hg8aquatic



07514 506156



01423 869590

# THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

harrogate aquatic  
AQUARIUM & POND SPECIALISTS

Just like us, fish need a bit of TLC when they are recovering from an illness or stressful situation. There are lots of things you can do to help them with their health and general wellbeing after you've solved the cause and treated the symptoms. Anything you can do to help your fish rest, recharge and repair will dramatically increase their chances of making a full recovery.

- **Block out the light** for a few days—fish are more relaxed in the dark and will use less energy on moving around if they are in their night-time chill-out mode, leaving energy spare for cell repair. Switch tank lights off or cover over a pond with a tarp.
- **Add extra plants** and decorations—the more cover they have, the safer fish will feel and the sooner their body systems can switch from generating adrenaline for 'fight or flight' survival to the immune system response and skin healing.
- **Increase the amount of oxygen** dissolved in the water—this lets your fish take it easy as they don't need to expend as much energy swimming around to get oxygenated water flowing over their gills.
- **Add Tonic Salt** to slightly raise the salt levels of the water. This helps fish that have damaged skin to regulate how much water they absorb through their wounds and stops their bodies swelling up. It can also help fight fungal infections.
- **Add vitamins and minerals** to help boost their immune response—a bit like how we reach for the Vitamin C tablets at the first sign of a cold! Vitamins are essential for the immune system and are absorbed from their food and through their gills/skin from the water they live in. It's not easy to test for vitamin content in water, so the easiest way to make sure they have access to what they need is to add some!
- **Add a water conditioner** with *Aloe vera*, as this helps them rebuild their protective mucus layer. Be careful not to add certain treatments if you have gouramis or bettas as these fish have a labyrinth organ (like a gas storage tank in their heads) and the *Aloe vera* can block the gas exchange and actually make it more difficult for them to breathe.
- **Add Catappa leaves** (Indian Almond leaves) as these release natural antibacterial and antifungal compounds and can help fish fight infections. You can use the actual dried leaves or skip to the good bit by using the liquid extract.
- **Try not to disturb** your fish for at least a week: no cleaning or rearranging the ornaments or adding new fish! Imagine you are tucked up in bed recovering from flu—the last thing you'd want is someone coming in to Hoover round you, wash the windows, move all the furniture or invite a group of strangers to share your room!
- **Feed them good quality food**, ideally something with pre- and pro-biotics to help them digest the food fully/easily with minimal waste. We usually recommend a food with added stimmune to support the immune system and a good protein level to give them the building blocks they need for repairing damaged cells.
- **Pay close attention** to whether the fish is eating. Sometimes a really poorly fish doesn't want to come up to feed, particularly if feeding time is a bit of a rugby scrum with other tankmates, so you can try to make sure food is reaching their hiding place. If they have gone off their normal food you might need to tempt them with something more interesting—live food or something with added garlic is often a winner! If they really aren't interested in feeding, respect their choice and give them time—don't be tempted to catch them and put them in a tub so you can keep a closer eye on them!
- If you need to do a water change during the recovery period, try to do it carefully without disturbing the fish—siphon gently from the surface and do 10% at a time rather than a gung-ho 50% change and thorough churn-up of the gravel!
- **Test the water regularly** to make sure conditions stay optimal to support recovery.