

Feeding Tips

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Lately we've been getting a lot of indications that many aquarists are not feeding the best way, and unfortunately this is not limited to just beginners. I've repeatedly said that (in my opinion) proper feeding is the number one most important aspect of fish-keeping and the one husbandry chore most frequently done incorrectly. Many aspects of feeding are important. Quality, frequency and quantity vs water temperature are all critical, but one of the most important is the speed at which the food is eaten. Feedings can be heavy, but they can't be heavy all at once. It's very important that food does not sit long in the water.

Let's take a look at some simple facts about food and water. Water is a great solvent and almost everything will eventually dissolve in it. Unfortunately for fish-keepers, nutrients and vitamins are one of the easiest to dissolve. Consider that **after 30 seconds** of flake food exposure to water, up to **90% of some vitamins will have already dissolved in the water**, making your feedings less valuable to your fish. Even the harder to dissolve ones are mostly gone within a couple minutes. What's even more startling, is that most food-based medications are lost just as fast.

The object is to get these things into the fish's gut, not into the water. Freshwater fish do not absorb most substances directly from the aquarium water. They get their water requirements fulfilled through osmosis and are constantly excreting excess water through their kidneys to compensate for this. This process is controlled by their osmoregulatory system, which you may have heard of. Vitamins, minerals and medications cannot get in through osmosis and freshwater fish do not drink the water.

Proper feeding takes place in short intervals. Each interval should include only enough food to last 5-10 seconds. Once that is gone, you can repeat another interval and continue with the intervals until they have had the amount of food you think they should. When we feed in our hatchery, it's usually 4-5 trips around the room to complete one feeding. It takes a lot longer to feed this way, but any other technique is inferior.

Let's consider feeding medicated fish foods. The huge advantage is the ability to get the food into the fish's gut instead of the water column where it frequently is quite useless. Our medicated flakes are designed for the fish to eat a particular amount of flake which will contain a proper dose of medication to work on the problem. If your flake is sitting in the water for even 30 seconds, your fish will not get the proper dose. If it sits for much longer, the medication is probably completely gone and in addition, the food becomes highly substandard in regards to nutrition. In essence, you're throwing your money down the drain (literally).

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