



Blue Ridge Reef & Pet
102 WNC Shopping Ctr Dr.
Black Mountain, NC 28711
(828) 669 – 0032
www.blueridgereef.com

Bettas

There is only one popularly kept species of fish that thrives in a small body of water, and that species is *Betta splendens* –the Siamese fighting fish or “Betta.” The males of this species are spectacular. Bettas are one of the easiest to keep of all fishes.

Behavior

Bettas are a solitary fish and do best kept alone, though some will do fine in a community aquarium with other species. Other individuals are quarrelsome to any fish they run across. Most all Betta males will fight viciously among themselves. Most male Bettas will also kill a female if they are introduced into a small enclosure such as a bowl. Also consider that Bettas are slow swimmers and those beautiful fins are easily shredded by aggressive tank mates. If you intend to keep a Betta in a community aquarium, be prepared to move it to another container in case it doesn’t work out.

Size and Life Span

Bettas typically live about 3 years and reach 2 ½ inches body length. Proper water conditions and good food will ensure that they reach their potential. The oldest Betta I know about lived 5 years and 7 months.

Tank

While Bettas will survive in small bowls, it is less than ideal for them. In small bowls, changes happen quickly. For example, if the temperature of the room drops or rises, this change will happen much faster in a pint of water than in five gallons. Also, if the fish eliminates waste (through breathing, urinating or defecating), there is little water to dilute it in a bowl. If you ever have kept one betta in a pint bowl and another in an aquarium, you’ve no doubt seen the difference in health and vitality.

Conditions

Bettas will survive in hard or soft water, and in a temperature from 65 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Soft, neutral water around 75-78 degrees is ideal. A bowl or enclosure of at least one gallon is optimal, though they can be temporarily kept in enclosures as small as a pint jar. Bettas have a labyrinth organ that allows them to “breathe” air at the surface; this makes them adapted to waters with little dissolved oxygen. If your Betta is listless and has a poor appetite, check the temperatures. Usually adding a heater or moving the enclosure to a warmer room is all that is needed, but make temperature changes gradually!

Diet

There are many prepared foods specifically for Bettas. I alternate *Omega One Betta Pellets* and freeze-dried bloodworms daily. Bettas aren’t active fish with high caloric needs- only a tiny amount of food should be

offered. Put no more food in than the fish can eat in about 60 seconds. If you overfeed, remove any uneaten food with a net. Rotting food is deadly in an aquarium, even worse when concentrated in a small bowl.

Water Changes

The key to keeping a clean aquarium or bowl is regular water changes. I change the Betta bowls in the store weekly to twice weekly. I simply fill a 5 gallon bucket with tap water and allow it to sit uncovered overnight near the fish. Chlorine will dissipate from the water and the water will be the same temperature as is in the bowls. Then I simply fill a new bowl, pour the Betta through a net, plop him into the clean bowl and move on to the next one. On a smaller scale, an appropriate sized pitcher of water can be left by the Betta's tank or bowl overnight the day before you intend to clean. Otherwise, simply use a dechlorinator and be sure that the temperature is very close to that of the Bettas' enclosure.

- Chip Bridges