



ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION
LTD

"The voice of the ornamental fish industry"

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OATA RECOMMENDATIONS ON KEEPING TROPICAL (TEMPERATE) FISH IN UNHEATED AQUARIA

OATA has been asked on a number of occasions about whether species that are generally regarded as tropical should be kept in unheated aquaria.

The species under consideration are usually described as tropicals but may be described as temperate because they can live quite happily at lower temperatures than would normally be found in heated aquaria. This does not imply that they would survive outside in UK conditions and they should never be released to the wild.

The species being discussed are defined as those "that are suitable for unheated aquariums kept in centrally heated rooms only. They are not suitable for unheated aquaria in colder rooms or garden ponds." All aquariums should have an effective filtration system irrespective of its position.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 protect animals not just from cruelty but also protect their welfare by requiring that five key needs that animals have are satisfied; one of which is to be provided a suitable environment. Failure to ensure the welfare of animals in a person's control (whether in commercial or domestic settings) can carry quite significant penalties (up to 51 weeks in jail and £5,000 fine).

Each species of fish has a preferred temperature range. Depending on the species this range may be large or small and the tolerance of individuals outside that range might vary. Each household may vary, for instance air conditioning or central heating may or may not be available and some houses may be draughtier. The weather patterns can vary from year to year so the condition in any home in any given year can vary quite significantly.

Care should be taken to advise members of the public not to set up aquaria in areas of the home subject to rapid fluctuation in temperature e.g. nor above radiators or in cold draughts.

Species that we consider to be unsuitable for aquaria without heaters include:

- Common platy (*Xiphophorus maculatus*)
- Guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*)
- Southern American corydoras (*Corydoras sp.*)
- Siamese fighting fish (*Betta splendens*)

Suitable species include:

- American-Flag Fish (*Jordanella floridae*)
- Medaka (*Oryzias latipes*)
- Paradise Fish (*Macropodus opercularis*)
- Rosy Barb (*Puntius conchonius*)
- Variegated platy (*Xiphophorus variatus*)
- White cloud mountain minnow (*Tanichthys albonubes*)
- Zebra danio (*Danio rerio*)

If in doubt members are advised to adopt a cautious attitude i.e. unless the species are one of the commonly recognised outdoor pond species then they should be kept in an aquarium with a heater, the thermostat of which is set up at an appropriate level to avoid the temperature falling below the range the fish can easily tolerate.

If members choose to recommend any other species than the ones previously mentioned for inclusion in unheated aquaria, you may face a challenge from an animal welfare group. We would therefore recommend they acquaint themselves fully with biology of those species so they are able to readily justify any decision, possibly in court.

In general we would not recommend any species that cannot easily tolerate temperature below 17°C to be kept in unheated aquaria. Sources of information that may help you make this decisions include “Fishbase” website (www.fishbase.org) and many reference books sold through the trade and of course your own experience. An opinion may always be sought from OATA.

