

**THE FEDERATION
OF NORTHERN
AQUARIUM
SOCIETIES**



SHOWING FISH

A BRIEF GUIDE
FOR EXHIBITORS

FORWARD

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**FEDERATION OF NORTHERN
AQUARIUM SOCIETIES.**

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WHY SHOW FISH?

Why disturb your planted aquarium, catch a few fish put them in a show tanks transport them many miles to School Hall or Community Centre. Put them on a table then stand around all afternoon while the judges decide which is the best.

You have heard the argument many times by Aquarists who do not show their fish. They simply cannot understand why the showing fraternity go to all the trouble they do to show their fish. These are the same people that sometimes go to a show to look at the exhibits and then you will hear them say in a loud voice that they have got better fish than the one that has won at home. When you ask them why it is at home and not on the show bench?. They put that horrified expression on and say they would never think of bringing their fish out to a show, they do not need a judge to tell them that their fish are the best! Before they walk away you may be able to ask the basics about their fish, is the colour right , are all the fins intact, are any scales missing, is it active?. You may get the normal reply " yes I think so because when I looked at the tank the other day it seemed alright"! There lies the difference between the Fishkeeper and the exhibiting Aquarist. It has been said that the Aquarist who shows his/her fish, makes sure his/her fish are in the best possible condition all the time

But proving your fish are the best(or not as the case may be) is not the main reason for exhibiting your fish. The show is a guideline to the standard of fish currently available, and the competitive element must encourage people to obtain and produce the best standard of fish they can So it can be said of the Exhibiting Aquarist, he/she will only buy the best and is continually looking for perfection in the fish they keep.

Although many aquarists strongly disapprove of exhibiting their fish, the vast majority of enthusiasts derive a great deal of pleasure from visiting fish shows. The competitive fish show is an important event in the annual calendar for most fishkeepers and breeders alike. It provides a means of having an independent assessment made by a judge of the fish exhibited. The fish can be compared against others of the same variety and personal conclusions drawn as to how much progress is being made in the improvement of their fish breeding stock. Competition also provides the spur to greater endeavour, and, when you begin to

gain awards, the incentive to do better in the future.

The open show has many advantages, apart from the element of competition. It enables the experienced breeder to display their fish, and thus find a market for their stock. It enables the novice to see top quality fish, to meet experienced fishkeepers and breeders and to learn from them about the art of breeding and raising good sized fish to maturity. The show brings together hobbyists from various parts of the country, and so permits new friendships to be formed, ideas exchanged and knowledge imparted. It provides publicity for the hobby by attracting the general public, teaches the novice to distinguish a good fish from an inferior one, and provides a meeting place for all who are interested in fishkeeping.

START RIGHT

So how do you go about showing your fish? First of all you do not need to spend a great deal of money to be able to show quality fish.

You can gain awards from the fish in your one and only community tank, although you cannot deny that it is easier when you have more tank space available. But dozens of tanks in a fish house is more likely to be those of the dedicated breeder than the dedicated exhibitor.

Perhaps the first thing you should do is to go along to a show to have a good look round.

At the show study the rules and classes carefully, study the fish on the bench and especially look hard at the winners. Then look at the losers, (fish I mean) and see if you can see why one is better than the other. On the other hand after judging has finished, try to collar a judge and explain you have come along simply to learn before you show. Most judges do not mind chatting about the fish they have judged, and you will probably find him very willing to help you. Have a chat with the exhibitors pick up a few tips from them, but probably the best place to do your chatting is at your local aquarist society. I believe it is a distinct advantage to be a member as it is there you will meet people who have been showing for years and have the experience to pass on to you. Also society members who show usually travel together or meet up at the show and this makes it a more social event. Being a member of a society has the advantage of them being

able to ease you into the world of showing gradually, for most societies hold "Table Shows" which are small shows held on club nights through out the year for club members only. Here you can bring your fish learn how to bench them correctly, have them judged and any problems can be ironed out before you head for the "Open Show" circuit.

All shows are held under some form of rules and regulations usually laid down by the local Aquarist Federation to which your society will probably be a member of. Such Federations also issue lists of "norm sizes" which tell you the size a particular fish should grow to in the aquarium.

Get yourself a copy of the local rules and norm sizes, study them and you will know the ground rules.

You may wish to by pass the about and jump in at the deep end if you want, but it can be such a servere blow to the old ego and may put you off showing for life, if the fish you thought were the best do not perform on the show bench. There much more to it than simply putting a fish in a tank and standing it on a show bench.

WHAT TO SHOW

The actual species depends on your own preferences, but how to pick the best fish is another matter.

By now you will have your own favourite fish, so start here, study this type of fish at the shows, check all the details of the winning fish, get a clear picture in your mind, and that will be the "bench mark" for you to aim at.

Go around the various aquarium shops, and stick to the target you have set yourself. Do not be put off by the dealer who says he has all the best fish, when you know differently, believe in yourself.

Be very choosey in what you buy, if the dealer gets upset by you peering into his tanks for a long period, forget it. The chances are he would not br prepared to catch the specfic fish you wanted anyway.

Do not buy old fish however good they look. A fully mature fish will not have a long show life, and you do not know how old the mature fish is. There again it could be just fully grown, in which case you can be lucky.

Remember your fish will have to be prepared for the show, and by the time it is ready it could be past its best.

Youngsters are potential your best buy. fish half grown or approaching maturity. You will need a keener eye than any judge if you are to pick a winner every time.

Never totally rely on anybody else's judgement whether it is the dealer or a friend. That final decision must be your own. Listen to advice by all means, but make the final decision yourself, then you will only have yourself to congratulate, or blame, as the case maybe!

Get to know the dealers personally, if you can, and some will assist you with the "judging" of the fish in their tanks.

Do not buy a tank full of fish and hope one will turn out right, one might, but then again it might not, and you will have spent a lot of extra money. Just take your time and pick the best.

There is another way to get your show fish, and in many ways much more rewarding, but it will take even longer to have good fish ready for showing. Yes try and breed your own prize specimens, or try to buy some fry off an exhibitor, from the same stock as he is showing. There are no guarantees that any of the fry will turn out like the fish he is showing, but the chances are more in your favour than if you had bought six unrelated fish from a shop. You will know their pedigree and will also have the satisfaction of having raised them yourself.

YES, have a go at the ultimate, breed your own.

UP TO SHOW STANDARD

Three things that any fish requires if it is to be at its best all the time,

- 1.-Plenty of space
- 2.-The right conditions
- 3.-Top quality food

Always keep these points in your mind, and when starting out it is better to play safe

Judges use the 'five twenties' system of pointing to determine the best fish.

APPROVED POINTING

FISH SINGLE

Size 20; Body 20; Colour 20; Fins 20; Condition and Department 20; _____ Total 100.

FISH PAIRS

Males:

Size 20; Body 20; Colour 20; Fins 20; Condition and Department 20; _____ Total 90.

Females:

Size 20; Body 20; Colour 20; Fins 20; Condition and Department 20:-----Total 90.

Matching of the Pair.-----Total 20.

Grant Total-----200.

Divided by two to give--100.

Definitions

SIZE: The Aquarium Norm Size for maximum size which is normally attainable, is that which is measured from the anterior tip of the snout to the posterior end of the caudal peduncle which is awarded 20 points. Under this size will be awarded less than 20 points.

CONDITION: Is soundness of body and finnage.

DEPARTMENT: Is carriage and behaviour.

Size: The fish should be as near as possible to the 'norm size' quoted for it.

Body: This should be as nearly as possible to the ideal outline for the species. It should not be too fat or too thin, deformed or out of proportion.

Fins: Should conform to the proper shape for the species, be the correct size and have the right number of rays. Should not be frayed or ragged.

Colour: Should be as bright and clear as possible for that variety of fish.

Condition: Covers the soundness of the fish body and points will be lost for missing scales, scars or other marks. No disease or parasites should be evident.

Department: Covers how the fish behaves in the show tank. It should alert with fins erect and in the correct position in the tank for that species. It should not be dashing about wildly.

If your fish looks good in all categories in its tank, now is the time to think about preparing it for the show.

TRAINING YOUR FISH

May be a funny statement, but the secret of showing fish lies in the art of training them to deport themselves well in a show tank. Some fish will naturally show off on the show bench others will sulk. A quality fish that has not been prepared for public showing may well refuse to swim or spread its fins, and there again it may be so nervous that it constantly dashes to and fro. In both cases the judge will find it extremely difficult to inspect the fish properly, and in any event points will be deducted for poor deportment. A

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A word of warning. Although the majority of aquarists are trustworthy and stewards do their very best to ensure the safety of the exhibits, it is not unknown for a fish to vanish during the busy rush of debenching, but fortunately such incidents are very rare. It is a sensible precaution to remove exhibits as soon as possible after debenching is allowed.

