

Sexing Cichlids

How do you sex green Texas cichlids and Jack Dempseys?

By Lee Newman

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Jack Dempsey (Rocio octofasciata)
by Oliver Lucanus.

Q. How do you tell the difference between male and female green Texas cichlids and Jack Dempsey cichlids?
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A. Sexing cichlid fish usually show few obvious outward differences can be difficult, particularly with young specimens not yet showing any secondary sex characteristics. Unless the cichlids in question are at least a year old, it may not be possible to assign gender to the individual cichlid fish in question.

It is usually much easier to sex cichlid fish that have grown up together in the same fish aquarium – or at least those have been maintained under the same husbandry conditions. The reasoning is that with all things being equal (such as aquarium water quality, space and access to fish food, male and female cichlid fish eventually begin to show their secondary sex characteristics naturally. That's why most experienced cichlidkeepers advise to purchase a group of at least six young fish, raise them together and let them show you who is who.

The secondary sex characteristics can be subtle in some species, so it usually takes some practice to reliably separate the sexes, but here is a list of characters you can use on your green Texas cichlids (*Herichthys carpintis*) and Jack Dempseys (*Rocio octofasciata*):

Males usually are larger than females of the same age have longer dorsal and anal fins than females of the same age are slimmer than females when given access to the same amount of food are more aggressive than females and are more colorful than females.

Luckily, if your cichlids are young, you may not have to wait long before they tell you which is which, as both green Texas cichlids and Jack Dempseys will often spawn at considerably smaller sizes than their adult maximums. In that case, simply watch which fish does the egg laying and tending versus the fish that does all the bullying! Good luck!