

Chaca Catfish With Fat Lip

A fat lip can be an adverse reaction to water that has become too acidic.

By Ginny Eckstein

Q. I have a Chaca chaca catfish. Recently it has developed a "fat lip." I would like to know what this is, and if anything needs to be done about it? I'm also curious about its form of locomotion. It seems to suck in water through its mouth and blow it out through slits in its side.

A. Another Chaca aficionado! I think I know what you're referring to as a "fat lip," although I've observed this problem on other parts of a chaca's body. It appears swollen, almost like a blister, and loses coloration in that area. Eventually the fish stops eating fish food and dies. I believe this to be an adverse reaction to water that has become too acidic. Regular partial water changes will clear up this problem.

Because chacas are usually fed live fish foods (I've never had one that would accept prepared fish foods), their fish aquariums are sometimes neglected when it comes to water changes. If the water looks clean, we have a tendency to procrastinate about doing regular water changes and then the aquarium water becomes acidic.

It's also possible that your catfish cut or wounded itself on something in the fish aquarium. This usually leads to fungus on the wound. Avoid using glass gravel or rough-surfaced rocks as the substrate in your catfish aquarium.

I've observed the same ingestion of water through the mouth while the chaca is inhaling a goldfish. This is a feeding behavior and has nothing to do with locomotion. The chaca, which is a gape-and-suck predator that devours fish half its size, does well in a fish aquarium with other large catfish (not Corydoras).