

When Something Goes Wrong In Your Fish Tank

What to do when something goes wrong in your fish tank.

By David A. Lass

It happens to all fishkeepers – something simply goes wrong in your fish aquarium. It's really important that you carefully observe your fish every day, so you know what the fish look like when things are fine, and also the normal behavior and interaction of the fish in the aquarium.

Signs that something is wrong in your fish aquarium can be that the water appears cloudy or green. Also, if your fish aquarium has anything other than a pleasant "aquatic" smell. The other clear indicator that something is wrong with your fish aquarium is in the behavior of the fish. Are the fish gasping at the water surface or dashing around the fish aquarium? Do the fish have little white spots, cloudy eyes or torn fins? Is anything else wrong with the appearance of the fish? Are the fish eating normally?

When any of these conditions appear, the first thing not to do is to reach for a bottle of something to add to the fish aquarium. The first thing to do is ask yourself if you did anything new to the fish aquarium recently. Did you add a new fish, aquarium ornament or aquatic plant? Did you put more light on the fish aquarium? Has anyone been around the fish aquarium with cleaning chemicals? Check the water in the fish aquarium for pH, ammonia, nitrite and nitrate. These are "The Big Four" that describe fish aquarium water quality, and knowing their values is really important in diagnosing any problems with your fish aquarium. If you are sure there are no changes to the fish aquarium and the water parameters are good, the first thing to do is a 30 to 40 percent water change, making sure you treat the new water to remove chlorine and chloramines. Also make sure the water is approximately the same temperature as the fish aquarium's water. The vast majority of problems with fish and fish aquariums have to do with deteriorating water quality, and a water change will usually do wonders.

If there are visible signs of infection or disease with your fish, you may have to treat the fish aquarium, but don't go dumping in chemicals unless you know why you are doing so. Antibiotics are usually not the right thing to add to a fish aquarium, because unless you have a microscope and know how to use it, you are not going to be able to know for sure what bacteria you are trying to do away with. The real problem with fish antibiotics, however, is that they are not selective, and while you may cure whatever disease the fish have, you will at the same time wipe out the good bacteria of the nitrogen cycle and cause your fish much more stress than any bacteria could. Freshwater ich (little white spots) and fungus (white cottony growth or frayed fins) are the major problems you can treat your fish for. Fish are pretty rugged animals, and if given high-quality water conditions in the fish aquarium, and quality and varied fish foods, fish can usually fight off most diseases and parasites using their immune systems.