

Controlling Snails

How can one safely control snails in a fish fry tank?

By Mike Wickham

Q. I have a 10-gallon aquarium for my baby platies, and I would like to have a skunk loach to go after the snail eggs. The vast number of snails that have come in on my plants is astounding. What should I do about the snails, and will a skunk loach eat the fry?

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A. Skunk loaches will eat snails, but I'm not sure if they will eat snail eggs. I'd recommend against adding the loaches to a fry aquarium. They'd have no trouble eating small fry, and skunk loaches are often aggressive toward other fish.

Unfortunately, I can think of no snail predators that would be safe to mix with fry. You'll have to manually control the snails. Depending on how many snails you have, you may be able to pick them out by hand or smash them against the glass for the fish to peck at for food. (Don't do the latter if there are a lot of snails, as too many dead snails would pollute the aquarium.) One way to remove excess snails is to place a coffee saucer on the aquarium bottom. Bait it with tablet food to attract the snails. When several collect on the saucer, remove it, and destroy the snails.