

## Feeding Seahorses Live Shrimp

### Should you feed your seahorses live shrimp?

*BY Carol Cozzi-Schmarr*

Q. I understand that it is a good idea to feed my seahorses live shrimp once a week. Is this true? Will it be harder for them to eat the frozen Mysis if they get so much live food? What type of shrimp do you recommend? I can get ghost shrimp at my LFS but I am concerned that they are as endangered as the seahorses. Is it okay to feed these ghost shrimp? What about the red volcanic shrimp from Hawaii? Are they a better alternative?

Thanks, Becky

A. You are right in that it is a good idea to feed your seahorses some live food occasionally. You may be spoiling them a little by feeding them once a week, but that is okay. After all what are pets for but to spoil and enjoy? I would recommend feeding the live food once a month as a minimum and once every two weeks as optimum. It is also a very good idea to feed the live food whenever you go away for vacation or leave someone else in charge of feeding and taking care of your seahorse tanks. If you set up a live holding tank for your shrimp you can just take enough to feed your herd for a day or so and leave the rest in the tank. This way it is very hard to overfeed your seahorses or overload your biofiltration. And since it is a live food there is no need to worry about uneaten leftovers on the bottom of the tank that can cause your tank to crash.

If your seahorses are healthy and farm raised they should easily be able to switch from live food to frozen without any hesitation. If your seahorse does not easily switch from fresh to frozen food you are probably overfeeding or presenting some food that is not in good condition or not presented properly. You should contact your supplier immediately or join a seahorse club. You will find other seahorse hobbyists at these clubs that can tell you their own experiences on feeding frozen and live foods. Often they will be able to help you make the transition easier.

As far as type of live foods, the ghost shrimp is okay from an environmental perspective. As far as I know these shrimp are not in short supply and are not taken illegally from restricted areas. They certainly are not an endangered species. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to ask and find out where your shrimp do come from. The biggest problem with the ghost shrimp is that they are not a highly nutritious source of food for the seahorse and they are simply too big. The Hawaiian volcanic red shrimp is really the ideal live food for the seahorse. Not only are they the perfect size but the nutritional profile is absolutely superb! It is the best food I have ever seen for the seahorses.

This shrimp *Halocaridina rubra* is a candidate for the endangered species list. At any moment they could be put on CITES appendix 2 just like the seahorse. They are rare in that they are only found in the anchaline ponds in Hawaii and not in abundant numbers. They are delicate in that they do not like the light and need to be kept at a specific gravity of 1.0160. They can tolerate higher salinities for a few hours or so (just long enough for the seahorses to eat them!) but they will die very quickly if they are not taken care of properly.