

Writer's Guidelines for Aquarium Fish International

Read the writer's guidelines and learn how to submit your text for Aquarium Fish International.

So you want to write for Aquarium Fish International (formerly Aquarium Fish Magazine)? That's great, provided you know your subject. Aquarium Fish publishes articles about a wide variety of both fresh- and saltwater topics, and all of our authors are experts about what they write.

Who qualifies as an expert? If you have some experience with the fish you wish to write about, or a particular type of tank setup, that's the best place to start. Long-term success with keeping fish is great, and a track record of successful breeding efforts is even better. This type of experience is much preferred over an author who simply scans a book or does some brief research on the Internet before churning out an article.

What should you write about? Topics could include a particular fish species, a family of fishes, how-to articles about setting up specific types of tanks, reef tanks and their occupants, personal experiences with tropical fishkeeping (provided there's a lesson to be learned from the article), fish diseases, filtration hints, feeding tips, invertebrates (both fresh- and saltwater) and anything else that has to do with the fishkeeping hobby, both salt and fresh (or that interesting in-between world of the brackish dwellers). An occasional article about a unique species, even if it's not widely kept (if at all) may sometimes appear in Aquarium Fish, but the appeal of such articles is limited. Plus, articles like those are difficult to illustrate. But if you have great photos to send along with the article, the piece stands a chance of being accepted.

We no longer publish articles on ponds; if you are interested in submitting an article to Ponds USA and Water Gardens (an annual), please send a query to ponds@bowtieinc.com.

Articles about a particular species of fish or family of fish, should contain a bit of natural history as well as (and this is most important) detailed care and husbandry of the fish in captivity. Include info about tank size, food, water temperature, pH, salinity levels (if applicable), tank setup, potential tankmates, fish temperament, lighting, potential lifespan (if writing about large fish that live a long time), etc.

You are welcome to send an article to us for review. Submissions are sent "on spec." This means "on speculation," which translates as, "You send, we read, we either accept or we don't." We're under no obligation to accept your article. It may be a while (a few months...maybe even longer) before you hear back from us. Please be patient. Contacting us once to make sure we received your materials is fine. Pestering us repeatedly could result in your article being returned just to get you off our backs.

We recommend that you query first by e-mailing aquariumfish@bowtieinc.com or sending your query to Aquarium Fish, P.O. Box 6050, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, to ensure that the topic is right for our audience and that we do not already have a similar topic submitted. But even if we listen to your idea and tell you to go ahead and write the article, the submission will still be on spec. Our telling you to go ahead with your article idea does not guarantee acceptance once we receive it. Any articles submitted could also be considered for our annual magazines: Marine Fish and Reef USA, Coral and Reef USA and Aquarium USA.

General comments about writing style. In general, articles should be easy for beginner hobbyists to understand. Some topics, such as reef tanks, may require a little more technical detail. Break the text up using subheads for specific sections. Regarding references: It is fine to send us a list of references, and you should because we sometimes use them to fact check information in articles. But you should not expect a lengthy list of references to appear at the end of your article. While we may run a short references list on occasion, we don't have the room or the inclination to run an exhaustive references section. References may appeal to some of our readers, but if the references are out of print, obscure papers or foreign publications that our readers cannot get hold of, they are of little use. Occasionally, if an article really warrants a lengthy list of references, we may decide to list them on our website, and reference that in the article. But for the most part, we are not trying to present technical papers or dissertations that need a large reference backup.

Regarding charts and diagrams: These are welcome, but they should be used sparingly. Please keep in mind that we cannot simply reprint a chart or diagram that has already appeared elsewhere; please create your own (e.g., in a Word document, by hand, etc.), and our in-house artist will re-render it. Detailed charts with a mind-numbing glut of figures typically turn off our readers, so more simple charts are preferred.

Regarding acknowledgments: Even though it's a nice gesture, we prefer that you thank the people who helped you with your article in person or with a personal letter, not in print. Acknowledgments are nice for those receiving them, but they

have zero benefit for our readers and take up valuable space that could otherwise be used for text/photos.

When mailing us materials that you want back, such as articles, computer disks or photos, be sure to provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope with sufficient postage to cover their return in case we choose not to keep them (or for return after we're done using them). You can e-mail articles only (without photos) to us as Word docs, RTFs or text-only attachments. You can also send articles using regular mail; include a hard copy as well as a copy on disk, if possible.

Have photos to go with your article? Many of our writers supply their own photos, and you can, too, if you have some you want to send with which to illustrate an article. Be forewarned, however: Even though you send photos specifically for your articles, we may still use other photographers' photos to illustrate your article. We take 35mm slides, as well as digital images. Digital images must be high-quality, at least 4x5 inches print size at 300 dpi, jpg or tif format. If sending in an article with photos, please send the whole package together on a CD or DVD by postal mail—due to e-mail limitations, we cannot take photo submissions by e-mail.

If we like your article, we will send you a contract telling you we want to purchase it for potential future use in the magazine. You'll need to sign the contract and return a copy to us before we can use the article. Of course, anything that appears in the magazines is subject to editing by our staff.

Pay rates. Prices can vary, depending on length and level of technicality. We generally pay 15 cents per word and will offer a package deal if you supply useable photos. Payment is made upon publication, during the cover month of the issue in which your work appears (i.e., you will be paid in May for an article that appears in the May issue).

What rights do we purchase? For print, we buy only first-time North American rights. All rights revert back to you after we publish your article/photos. Do not send articles that have been published elsewhere. We also do not accept simultaneous submissions.

Where to send your stuff. Our mailing address is Aquarium Fish, P.O. Box 6050, Mission Viejo, CA 92690. E-mail can be sent to aquariumfish@bowtieinc.com. If you have further questions, phone us at (949) 855-8822.

We make every effort to handle materials with the utmost care and respect. However, we cannot be held responsible for lost or damaged materials.