

boxfish and cowfish care sheet



Boxfish and cowfish have box-shaped bodies. These slow swimmers with inquisitive personalities are recommended for experienced aquarists only due to their fragile nature and potential toxicity. When stressed, these fish have been known to release toxins into the water that can harm its tank mates.

facts

average adult size:	10 to 24 inches long, depending on species
average life span:	depends on species
diet:	omnivore
minimum aquarium size:	125+ gallons, depending on species
water temperature:	75 to 82° F depending on species, as some may prefer temperatures outside these parameters
specific gravity:	1.020 to 1.025



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

diet

A well-balanced omnivorous boxfish and cowfish diet consists of:

- Flakes, pellets or frozen.
- Vary diet to ensure proper nutritional balance.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your boxfish or cowfish:

- Depending on species and size, feed small amounts 2 to 3 times daily, no more than fish will eat in 1 to 2 minutes.
- Thaw frozen food before feeding and vary diet to maintain health.
- Ensure proper consumption; these fish often lose out to faster fish.
- Don't offer floating food as they may swallow air which will cause buoyancy issues.

housing

- Keep in an appropriately sized aquarium; provide plenty of substrate, rocks and hiding places.
- Stable water quality and parameters are critical to the health of aquatic life. If you are unsure of your water quality, Petco provides free water testing.

characteristics

- Slow swimmers; often sit still for long periods of time.
- Very personable.

habitat maintenance

Daily: Check filter, water temperature, specific gravity and other equipment.

Weekly: Check water quality at least twice a week.

Monthly: Change 10 to 25% of the total volume of water every 2 to 4 weeks or as needed.

Introduce new inhabitants to the aquarium gradually.

compatibility

- Compatible with non-aggressive fish; incompatible with "cleaner" fish, which may damage their skin. Because boxfish and cowfish may release deadly toxins when stressed, do not keep with aggressive fish.
- Not recommended for reef tanks.

signs of a healthy fish

- Clear eyes
- Healthy appetite
- Swims slowly; sits still for long periods
- Fins completely intact and undamaged
- Bright, even coloring

Avoid overcrowded conditions, which are a major cause of stress and disease. Maintain good water quality with regular water changes and adequate filtration.

red flags

- Loss of color or appetite
- Spots or fungus on body or mouth
- Erratic swimming
- Labored respiration
- Cloudy eyes

If you notice any of these signs, test water quality and improve as necessary.

common health issues		
Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Fin rot	Frayed or disintegrating fins; the base of the fins usually reddens.	Improve water quality; consult your aquatic veterinarian for treatment.
Fungus	White cottony growth and/or discoloration of the eyes.	Quarantine fish; use a commercial antifungal remedy as directed.
Bacterial infections	Cloudy eyes, open sores, and/or reddening of the skin	Improve water quality; use a commercial antibacterial remedy as directed.
Marine ich	Cysts on fins, gills and skin; labored respiration, excess skin mucus or pale skin.	Treat entire aquarium with a commercial parasite remedy and improve water quality; freshwater dips can dislodge the parasites.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized aquarium
- Appropriate food, dry and frozen
- Décor
- Water conditioner
- Marine aquarium salt
- Filter
- Water test kit
- Full spectrum lighting
- Net
- Thermometer
- Protein skimmer (recommended)
- Marine substrate
- Heater
- Hydrometer
- Book about boxfish and cowfish

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on boxfish and cowfish and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all aquatic life are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Atypical Mycobacterium* and *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your aquatic life or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for aquatic life and should consider not having aquatic life as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about aquatic life and disease.

This care sheet can cover the needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

