

freshwater livebearers

care sheet



Most freshwater livebearers originate in North, Central or South America. They give birth to live young and readily adapt to changes in the water. Recommended for beginning aquarists.

facts

includes:	mollies, platies, swords, guppies, halfbeaks and variatus fish species
average adult size:	1 to 6+ inches long, depending on species
average life span:	depends on species
diet:	carnivore, herbivore or omnivore, depending on species
minimum aquarium size:	10+ gallons, depending on species
water temperature:	72 to 82° F depending on species, as some may prefer temperatures outside these parameters



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.

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diet

A well-balanced freshwater livebearer diet consists of:

- Flakes, pellets or frozen.
- Avoid exclusively feeding one type of food to ensure nutritional balance.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your freshwater livebearer:

- Depending on species and size, feed small amounts 1 to 2 times daily, no more than fish will eat in 1 to 2 minutes.
- Thaw frozen food before feeding.

housing

- Keep in an appropriately sized aquarium; provide plants and décor for hiding.
- 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

- Freshwater livebearers do best in groups of three or more of the same species.
- Some species, such as mollies, do best in water with one teaspoon of freshwater aquarium salt added per gallon of water; test the specific gravity of your water before adding salt.

habitat maintenance

Daily: Check filter, water temperature and other equipment.

Weekly: Check water quality at least once 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

- Check Petco's Freshwater Compatibility Care Sheet for species specific information.

signs of a healthy fish

- Clear eyes
- Healthy appetite
- 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
- Weight loss
- Bloating

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.
Ich	White spots appear on fins and body; fish rubs against hard objects or swims awkwardly. Rapid respiration.	Quarantine fish immediately; use a commercial ich remedy as directed.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized aquarium
- Appropriate food, dry and frozen
- Décor
- Water conditioner
- Filter
- Water test kit
- Full spectrum lighting
- Net
- Thermometer
- Freshwater substrate
- Heater
- Airline tubing
- Airstone
- Air pump
- Book about freshwater livebearers

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on freshwater livebearers 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.

