

# seahorse and pipefish care sheet



Seahorses are a tropical species and can be found in the waters of Indo-Pacific and Caribbean oceans; however, Petco seahorses are captive-bred and -raised. A seahorse's color variation ranges from black, brown, reddish-maroon, yellow and gold. Using their tail, seahorses can grasp hold of branches and other décor. Pipefish are cousins of seahorses, and can be much stronger swimmers. They are for seahorse aquariums only and are for expert hobbyists.

## facts

average adult size:	4 to 11 inches (vertical), depending on species
average life span:	depends on species
diet:	carnivore
minimum aquarium size:	29+ gallons, depending on species
water temperature:	72 to 78°F
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.

# seahorse and pipefish

includes seahorse and pipefish species

## care sheet



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### diet

A well-balanced seahorse or pipefish diet consists of:

- Frozen mysis shrimp.
- Frozen brine shrimp may be fed as an occasional treat.

### feeding

Things to remember when feeding your seahorse or pipefish:

- Feed 2 to 3 times daily but do not overfeed.
- Thaw frozen food before feeding.

### housing

- Keep in an appropriately sized aquarium; provide artificial plants and corals for the Seahorse to grasp with their tail.
- Live rock can provide a natural food source while also enhancing biological filtration.
- **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

- Seahorses have a prehensile tail that they can use to grasp onto things.
- They are not strong swimmers and can't tolerate strong currents typically found in reef tanks.
- Captive-bred seahorses are hardier than those found in nature, and they can therefore tolerate environmental parameters similar to those of other marine fish.
- Pipefish can be beneficial in helping eradicate red bug infestations on acropora coral.
- Pipefish are relatively hardy and adjust well to aquarium life.

### habitat maintenance

- **Daily:** Check filter, water temperature, specific gravity 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

- Seahorses may be kept with pipefish and some gobies and snails, but it is best to keep them in a species tank with only other seahorses. Remove tank mates at the first sign of aggression and if your seahorse is not eating as they are competitive feeders.
- Be sure to research the tank compatibility for any fish you wish to add to your seahorse tank.

### signs of a healthy seahorse and pipefish

- Slow, sustained breathing
- Grasping décor in tank (seahorses)
- Eats normally
- Controlled buoyancy/floating
- **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
- Rapid respiration
- Rubbing against substrate
- Buoyancy problems
- Unable to grasp décor with prehensile tail (seahorses)

### common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Bacterial infection	Erosion/sloughing of the skin, cloudy eyes, rapid respiration, swelling and loss of appetite or unable to feed.	Improve water quality and seek veterinary advice.
Ectoparasites	Visible parasites (whitespots), ulcerations/blisters, cloudy eyes, rubbing against substrate, erratic behavior.	Improve water quality; seek veterinary advice.
Snout rot	Discoloration, swelling and/or tissue erosion of the snout, lockjaw, loss of appetite or unable to feed.	Improve water quality; seek veterinary advice.

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

## shopping list for needed supplies

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

## sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on seahorses and pipefish 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](http://cdc.gov/healthypets) and [petco.com/caresheet](http://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](http://petco.com) for more information.

