

# tang and surgeon fish care sheet



Tangs are often called surgeon fish because of the scalpel-like spine at the base of their tail. The spine is used for self-defense and territorial battles. Tangs are often found in coral or rocky reefs. Recommended for intermediate to experienced marine aquarists.

## facts

average adult size:	6 to 24+ inches long, depending on species
average life span:	depends on species
diet:	omnivore
minimum aquarium size:	50+ 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.

### diet

A well-balanced tang or surgeon fish diet consists of:

- Commercial algae sheets.
- Marine flake or pelleted herbivore food.
- Bloodworms, brine shrimp and mysis shrimp (frozen).

### feeding

Things to remember when feeding your tang or surgeon fish:

- Algae or algae sheets should always be present in the aquarium (attach to the side of the aquarium with a clip).
- 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 rock and décor for hiding places and plenty of room for movement.
- **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.**

### normal behavior

- Usually solitary and territorial, may be aggressive to new aquarium inhabitants; defend themselves by swinging their tail toward their target.
- Tend to inhabit all levels of the aquarium; can use their spine to wedge into a crevice.
- Some species, such as yellow tangs, are known to school, but must be kept in groups of three or more in odd numbers.

### 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

- Compatible with dwarf and large angelfish, blennies, clownfish, eels, gobies, groupers, hawkfish, lionfish, pseudochromis, puffers and wrasse. Check Petco's Marine Compatibility Care Sheet for more information regarding your specific species.

### sign of a healthy fish

- Clear eyes
- Eats vigorously
- Active swimming
- Fins completely intact and undamaged
- **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
- Listlessness
- Labored respiration
- Weight loss
- Cloudy eyes
- Frayed fins
- Erratic swimming
- Lateral line visible
- Dorsal fin erosion

### 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.
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.

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

## shopping list for needed supplies

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

## sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on tang and surgeon fish 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.

