



**SEA DWELLERS AND FRIENDS**  
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***Setting up a new aquarium TECH sheet***

In an established aquariums fish waste is broken down first to ammonia, then to nitrite, and finally to nitrate by bacteria colonies. Ammonia and nitrite can be toxic to fish. These colonies are not present in a new aquarium. They do develop naturally if there is a food source present. It will take approximately 4 weeks after you have added fish for them to develop. This process is what is commonly referred to as “the nitrogen cycle” or “new tank syndrome”. This paper refers primarily to freshwater aquariums, but the process is very similar in saltwater aquariums.

A tank does not have to be new for new tank syndrome to occur, it just has to be recently set up. Cleaning an aquarium too well will also produce new tank syndrome. Certain antibiotics will kill the bacteria colonies and cause new tank syndrome to occur.

There are commercially available products, which claim to speed up this process. Some common names are “Cycle” and “Stress Zyme”. Through my own experiences, these products may sometimes help, but they have proven to be unreliable. The best thing you can do is let Mother Nature do her job and not interfere.

There are also products that neutralize ammonia. Some common names are “Ammono Lock” and “Amquel”. They do neutralize ammonia but do not eliminate the cause (fish waste). It is more stressful on the fish to have the ammonia levels fluctuate than to have them high. These products also cause test kits to give false readings, so we do not recommend them.

**Starting your aquarium.**

The first thing that you should do is to get your aquarium set up, before you purchase any fish. Get water in your aquarium. Install the filters per the manufacture’s instructions. Install the heater and set the temperature to 76 to 78 degrees. Add a water conditioner like “Prime” or “Start Right” or “Stress Coat” if you have city water. If you do not have city water, it still would be a good idea to use one. Most well water is all right to use, even if it is softened water. However, if you have high iron levels in your water you may want to consider using reverse osmosis water. Let everything run for at least 24 hours.

Now it is time to add the fish. At this time you only want to add a few hardy expendable fish. Do not purchase anything that will cost a lot of money, because there is a strong possibility that not all of the fish will make it! **Be certain that you tell the sales person that you have just set up your aquarium.** They can make some recommendations as to which ones will do best.

<b>Some Good Starter Fish</b>	<b>Some Bad Starter Fish</b>
<b>Black /Red Eye/Head and Tail LiteTetra</b>	<b>Catfish</b>
<b>Rasboras</b>	<b>Algae Eaters</b>
<b>Mollies</b>	<b>Snails</b>
<b>Tiger Barbs</b>	<b>Sharks</b>
<b>Zebra Danios</b>	<b>Crabs</b>
<b>White Clouds</b>	<b>Newts</b>
<b>Gold/Blue Gourami</b>	<b>Neon Tetras</b>
<b>Platies</b>	
<b>Swordtails</b>	

Add the fish to your aquarium. Make sure that you acclimate the fish by floating the bags in your tank for about 20 minutes. Next add some of your water into the bag from your aquarium. Wait another 20 minutes. Add only the fish to your aquarium, never anyone else's water. **Do not add any more fish to the aquarium until the nitrogen cycle is finished.**

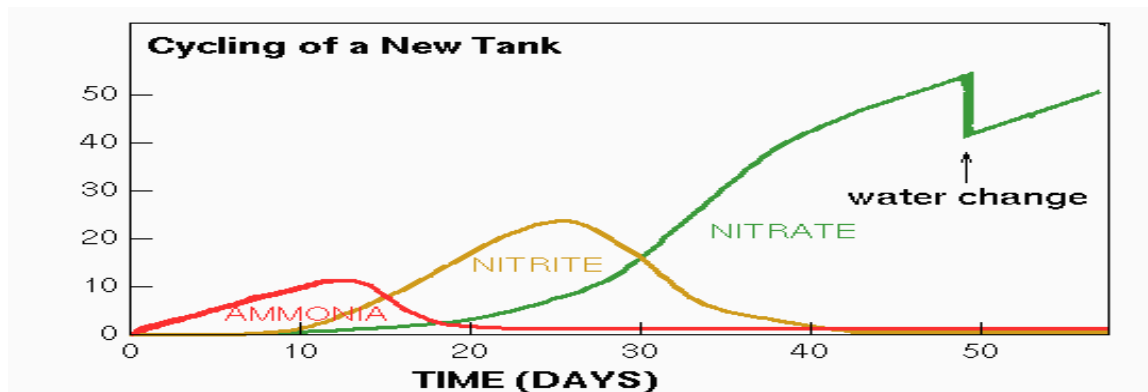
Now would be a good time to add a disease preventative. We use "Aquari-Sol". This will reduce the chance of your fish getting sick. Add it every time that you add fish to the aquarium or do a water change.

Make sure that you feed the fish once per day. Only feed them what they will eat in 5 minutes. If there is food left after 5 minutes, you should remove it with your net and feed them less next time. Uneaten food will cloud the water and make the ammonia level too high. Too much ammonia burns the fish's gills and they suffocate.

Give the fish at least 8 hours of darkness per day. Fish do not have eyelids. They need darkness to sleep. Too much light will also make a lot of algae grow and you will have to clean the aquarium more often.

After 2 weeks, bring in some water and we will test it. We can show you how your tank is doing and give you advice based on the results. It usually takes at least four weeks for the nitrogen cycle to be complete. So do not get your hopes up too soon.

After about four weeks you will notice golden brown stuff growing on the glass and on the decorations. This is algae and it is a sign that your aquarium is probably ready for an algae eater. Bring in some water around this time and we will test it for you. If your aquarium is not ready at this time, it will be soon.



### **Things to Remember:**

- Any fish will eat any other fish that will fit in its mouth.
- It takes as much time to take care of a small aquarium as it does a big one. Also, a big aquarium has room for more fish.
- Do not mix goldfish with tropical fish. Goldfish like cool water. Tropical fish like warm water.
- Barbs, Gouramis, and Danios are known fin nippers. Do not mix them with fish that have long fins like Angelfish, Guppies, and Male Bettas.
- Do not overfeed.
- Do not overcrowd. A good rule to go by is one and a half inches of fish per gallon of water.
- Fish swim horizontally, not vertically. Tall aquariums look impressive, but are hard to clean and cannot house as many fish as a horizontal aquarium of equal size.
- Know the dimensions of your aquarium. This will make it easier to buy accessories in the future.
- Do not put the aquarium in front of a window. The sunlight will affect the temperature and make a lot of algae grow.