



Primary Authority Advice

Developed in support of the Primary Authority Agreement between the City of London Corporation and the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association Ltd (OATA)

Requested Advice

What are the accommodation requirements of *Betta spp.*, primarily Siamese Fighting fish *Betta splendens*, in pet shops?

Advice Provided

The Fighting fish, *Betta spp.* are native to Asia and have evolved to survive in standing waters of floodplains, canals and rice paddies with particularly low oxygen content, as well as being found in medium and large rivers (Fishbase.org, 2015). *Betta* belong to a group known as anabantoids, which all possess a labyrinth organ allowing them to utilise atmospheric air, as well as normal gill respiration.

The Siamese Fighting fish, *Betta splendens*, is a commonplace species in the aquarium hobby and males are frequently housed singularly in multiple small containers in pet shops. The physiology of the species, as described above, may be given as a justification for this accommodation. However, a reputable retailer should endeavour to keep their stock in the best conditions possible, despite any tolerance of a species to poorer conditions. The small size of *Betta* tanks is not in itself an issue for this small species, but small volumes of water are more likely to fluctuate in temperature and the water will more rapidly deteriorate in quality. The following requirements are therefore advised;

1. The water quality criteria listed in the OATA Code of Practice must be maintained in all tanks or other receptacles accommodating Fighting fish. This may be achieved through filtration of the water in the receptacles, or by regular monitoring and necessary water changes, provided that the water quality parameters remain acceptable and stable.

2. Each fish must be housed in a tank or receptacle sufficiently large enough to enable it to turn and move freely in all directions;
 - a. Retailers seeking to renew their tanks for Fighting fish should be advised that new receptacles should be no smaller than 15cm x 15cm x 15cm (3.4 litres).
 - b. For existing systems housing Fighting fish; fish that measure 4cm in body length or less, not including the caudal fin, can be housed in receptacles no smaller than 10cm x 10cm x 12cm (1.2 litres). Fish that measure greater than 4cm in body length should be housed in receptacles with a length and width at least 2.5 times the length of the fish, and a minimum of 12cm depth.
3. Receptacles must be located in a position where they will not be subject to fluctuations in temperature or light levels.
4. Male fighting fish must not be able to see each other; they will exhibit territorial displays and doing so constantly will subject them to physiological stress.

Notes

- In accordance with Section 28 of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, Enforcing Authorities must consider the content of the attached procedure/document when undertaking relevant inspections at OATA member premises who have signed up as part of the Co-ordinated Partnership
- The scope of this Advice relates to the nature and contents of the attached document only. Enforcing Authorities will need to assess local compliance with the procedure/document and relevant legislation when inspecting relevant OATA member premises.

Contacts:

Deborah Jones
Animal Health Inspector

City of London Corporation

Heathrow Animal Reception Centre
Hounslow
Middlesex
TW6 3JF
Tel: 0208 745 7894/5
Email: Deborah.Jones@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Email: PAEnquiries@cityoflondon.gov.uk