



Annual Review 2018/19

Standards
Sustainability
Welfare



Key facts about the industry



£400 million

the amount UK fishkeepers spend a year on their hobby



3,000 UK pet shops

2/3 Sell fish



Fish are the most populous pet in the UK

100+ million

fish are kept in aquariums and ponds



4 million UK households own fish

14%

of the population



Pets are good for our health

£2.45 billion

the amount pets are estimated to save the NHS every year.

Watching fish in an aquarium leads to reduced blood pressure and reduces anxiety.

Having an aquarium in a care home's dining room led to residents having a better appetite!

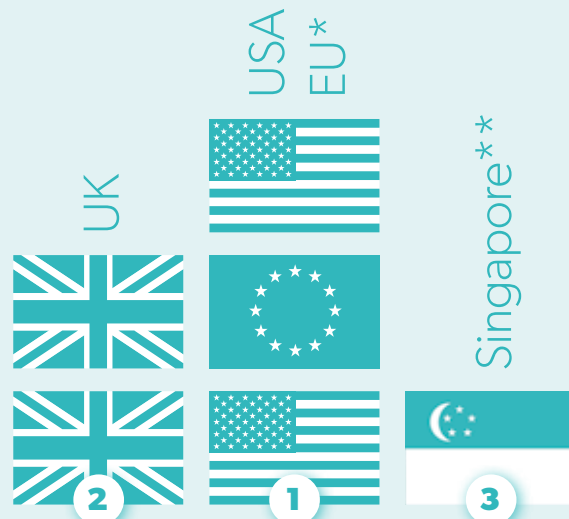


The UK aquatics industry is made up of retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, aquatic plant growers/sellers, fish breeders, importers & consolidators and pond & aquarium consultants

Top global importers of aquarium fish

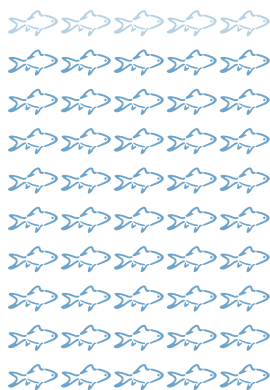
*EU countries combined top the USA as the largest importer of tropical fish

**Singapore is the main aggregator and exporter of fish from across Asia



Marine

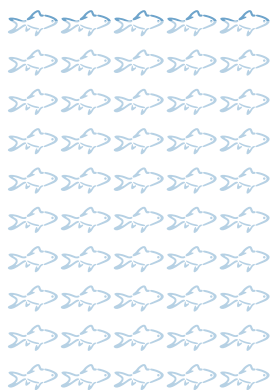
10%



Captive reared Wild caught

Freshwater

5%



80.9M
the annual amount of fish
in tonnes caught globally
from the sea

7–33M
tonnes are discards

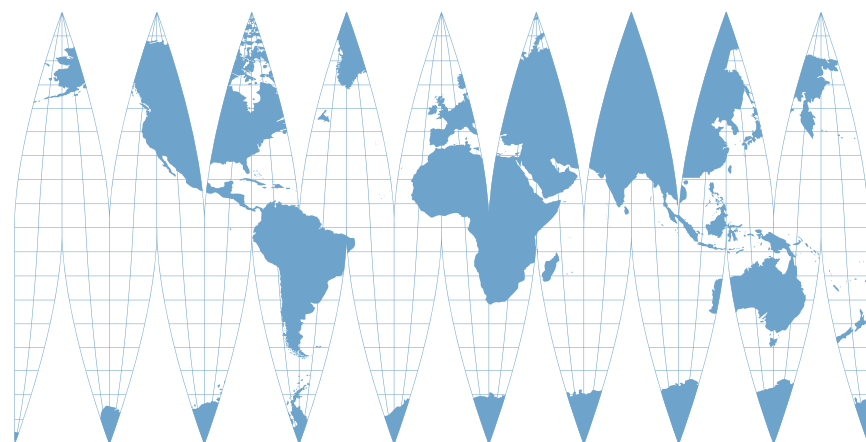
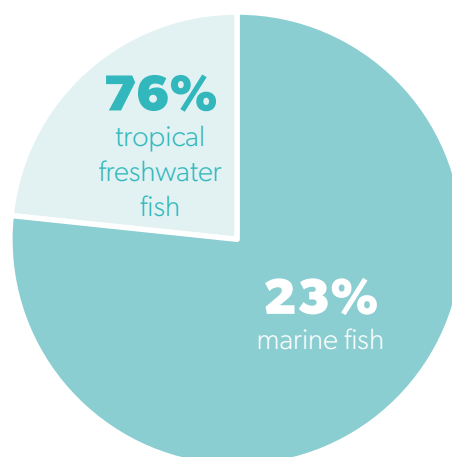
70
tonnes are sold alive
to the aquarium trade

4
tonnes of live marine
aquarium fish are landed
by plane in UK

Top EU importers of aquarium fish



EU imports



\$18 – \$20 billion

estimated worth of the global industry

Sources: Wild Caught Ornamental Fish – the trade, the benefits, the facts,
OATA UK Trade Statistics Report 2017, OFI Journals

Setting standards

Pet shop licensing

After years campaigning to review the system of pet shop licensing across the UK, 2019 has been a busy year assimilating all the changes brought in for English pet businesses, and preparing for change in Scotland.

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 came into effect in October that year with licences due for renewal at the beginning of 2019 using the new – much more complicated – regime. To help our members, OATA put together a pack of guidance and paperwork to help businesses get ready for their inspection, including notes on training policies and staff appraisals, advice on written procedures and forms to capture data. We also sought assured advice from our Primary Authority partner the City of London Corporation when issues started to arise over the implementation of the higher standards and training requirements.

To investigate the impacts of this huge change for pet shop licensing in England OATA, working with REPTA, issued a Freedom of Information request to local authorities and asked businesses for

feedback on their licensing experience. The outcomes formed a report which has been submitted to the Animal Health and Welfare Board England (a Government advisory body) and to Defra and other key stakeholders, looking at the promises the Government made at the start of the review to see if the new mandatory guidance has lived up to those expectations. Our conclusion is that the new regime has in fact created significant additional burdens on pet businesses and local authorities with little demonstrable benefit to animal welfare. And indeed in some cases the new requirements are actually putting animal welfare at risk.

OATA remains concerned about the lack of training on the guidance among local authority inspectors to help them implement this radical overhaul. We believe this is leading to misinterpretation of the new rules which, despite mandatory guidance, has only served to increase

complexity and confusion. It also does not seem to have captured the 'non-traditional' (online) businesses which sell animals, putting traditional businesses at a disadvantage as they commit finances and resources to keep up with the licensing requirements to sell animals as pets. Our concern is that this new regime could be another nail in the coffin for bricks and mortar businesses which either shut up shop completely or decide to stop selling animals because the paperwork burden is just too much. We are calling for a much more timely review of the legislation than is currently planned by Defra.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, MSP Jeremy Balfour signalled his intention to push for pet shop reform by launching a consultation on a private bill, to which we submitted a detailed response. We were delighted when Mr Balfour joined us on a visit to the Melville store of Fishkeeper Scotland, one of our member businesses.



With two-thirds of all shops that sell animals that require a licence being pet shops that sell fish we wanted to make sure Mr Balfour understood what is involved when they are inspected and what pet shops do to ensure the welfare of the animals they care for. During that visit, we were particularly keen to highlight the need to learn lessons from the English experience.

The Scottish Government announced at the beginning of January 2019 its intent to take up Mr Balfour's idea for licensing reform. A number of our member businesses joined our Chief Executive when he met with the Scottish Government policy team involved in drafting the new legislation and we were pleased to put forward representations on behalf of the tropical fish industry. We now await the consultation on any proposed legislative change after an acknowledgement from the Scottish Government to discuss an early draft of the proposed regulation.

Live fish through the post

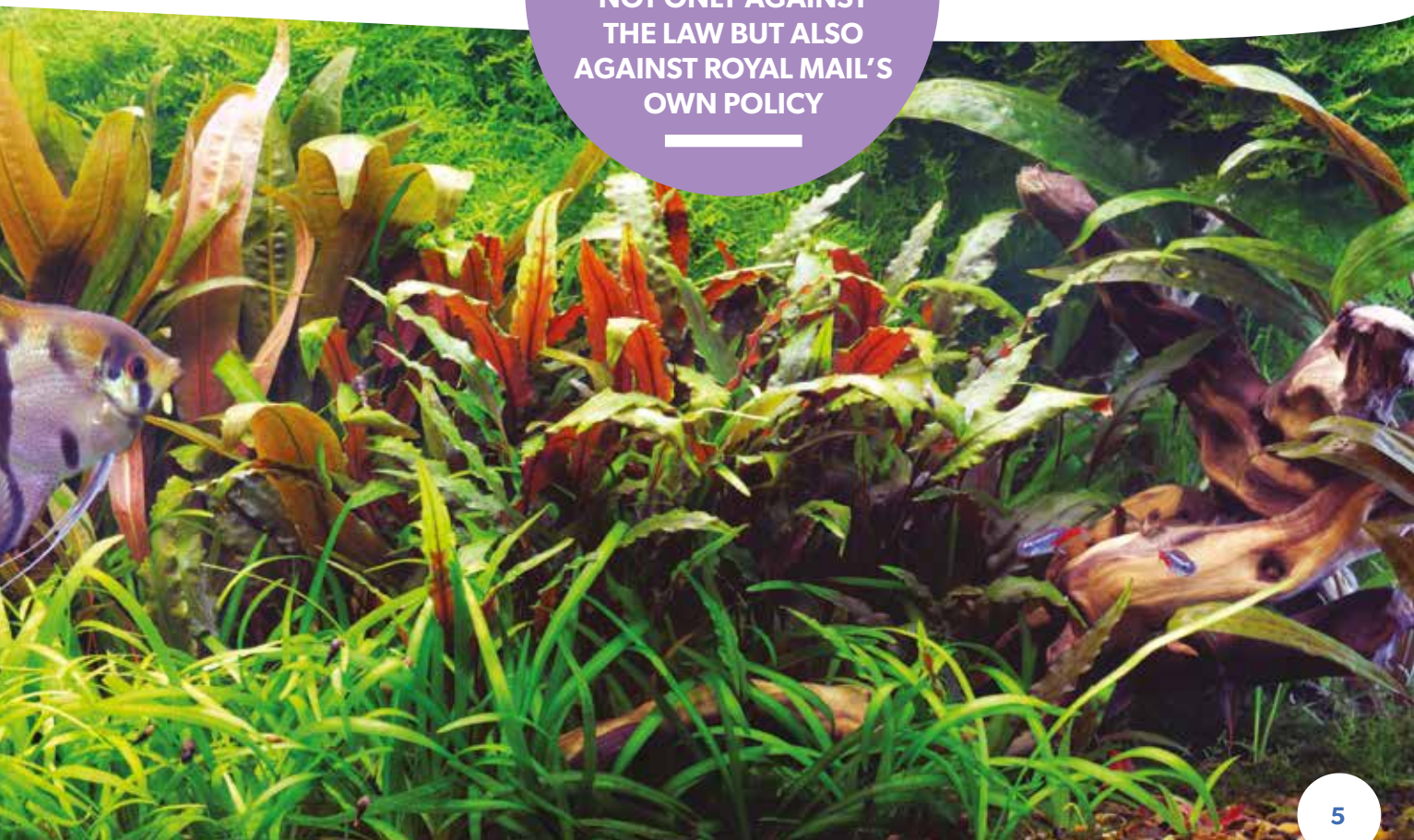
We have been highlighting the issue of live animal transport following various official consultations from Defra. We wrote to Royal Mail with evidence to show that people were sending live fish through the post, which is not only against the law but also against Royal Mail's own policy. Any transporter of live vertebrate animals needs to be authorised to do so and abide by the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order (for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). We continue to highlight this issue with both the Royal Mail and Government because this is an issue of animal welfare as well as the law and postal delivery of fish is not a standard we would want anyone selling fish to aspire to.



**PEOPLE ARE SENDING
LIVE FISH THROUGH
THE POST, WHICH IS
NOT ONLY AGAINST
THE LAW BUT ALSO
AGAINST ROYAL MAIL'S
OWN POLICY**

Next steps for CASC

We are working with Lord Trees and our colleagues at the Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association (REPTA) to help the Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC) take the next steps to enhance its engagement with groups with an interest in animal welfare. This pet sector representative group brings together organisations involved in the non-dog and cat pet sector to offer advice and information to Government on pet-related topics. We hope the group will enable us to have significantly greater influence in the development of Government policies affecting our industry, such as welfare in transport; the Government's animal sentience proposals; the welfare impacts of listings on the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulations and CITES Appendix I listings; educating pet keepers; the implications of changes to EU Animal Health Law; and the trade in improper veterinary medicines. We believe it will continue to be another way for us to show the high standards the pet industry currently work to and how we can all improve them.



Setting standards

Training gets City & Guilds' stamp of approval

OATA has offered specialised aquatics training for the industry for many years and it has always been highly regarded. But in December 2018 we were delighted to relaunch our Foundation and Advanced training packages with new online courses after gaining City & Guilds accreditation.

The programmes offer the only in-depth aquatics specific training designed by industry experts. It enables retailers to demonstrate to local authority inspectors across the UK the required species appropriate staff training they need to get a pet shop licence.

The two home-study training programmes – which offer both an introduction and more in-depth look at water quality, filtration, fish biology and fish health – are now delivered online, making it easier for students to work their way through the courses at a time and on a device that suits them, allowing them to fit in periods of study around work, travel and home life.

The Foundation Training Programme was created for new recruits to the trade who may not have a lot of knowledge about fishkeeping while the Advanced Training Programme takes a more detailed look at the four subject areas, so offers professional development for managers or those wanting to develop their knowledge.

"Having well-trained staff, knowledgeable about the particular species they sell, is a key element of pet shop licensing across the UK," explained Dominic. "Our training programmes have always been well-recognised by the UK tropical fish industry and local authorities so gaining City and Guilds accreditation makes them even more attractive to people within our industry to have on their CV and continues to raise standards within the sector."

FIND OUT MORE
ABOUT ALL OUR TRAINING
PROGRAMMES AT
[ORNAMENTALFISH.ORG/
TRAINING](http://ORNAMENTALFISH.ORG/TRAINING)

City & Guilds

ACCREDITED
PROGRAMME



Trading standards guides

OATA joined forces with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Trading Standards team to provide new guidance for our members in November 2018. We launched three new guides covering electrical goods, product safety and fair trading to help businesses show they are complying with the law and have done due diligence about the products they sell. Any OATA member challenged by local authorities over any issues covered by the three guides can be assured of regulatory support and backing through our Primary Authority partnership.



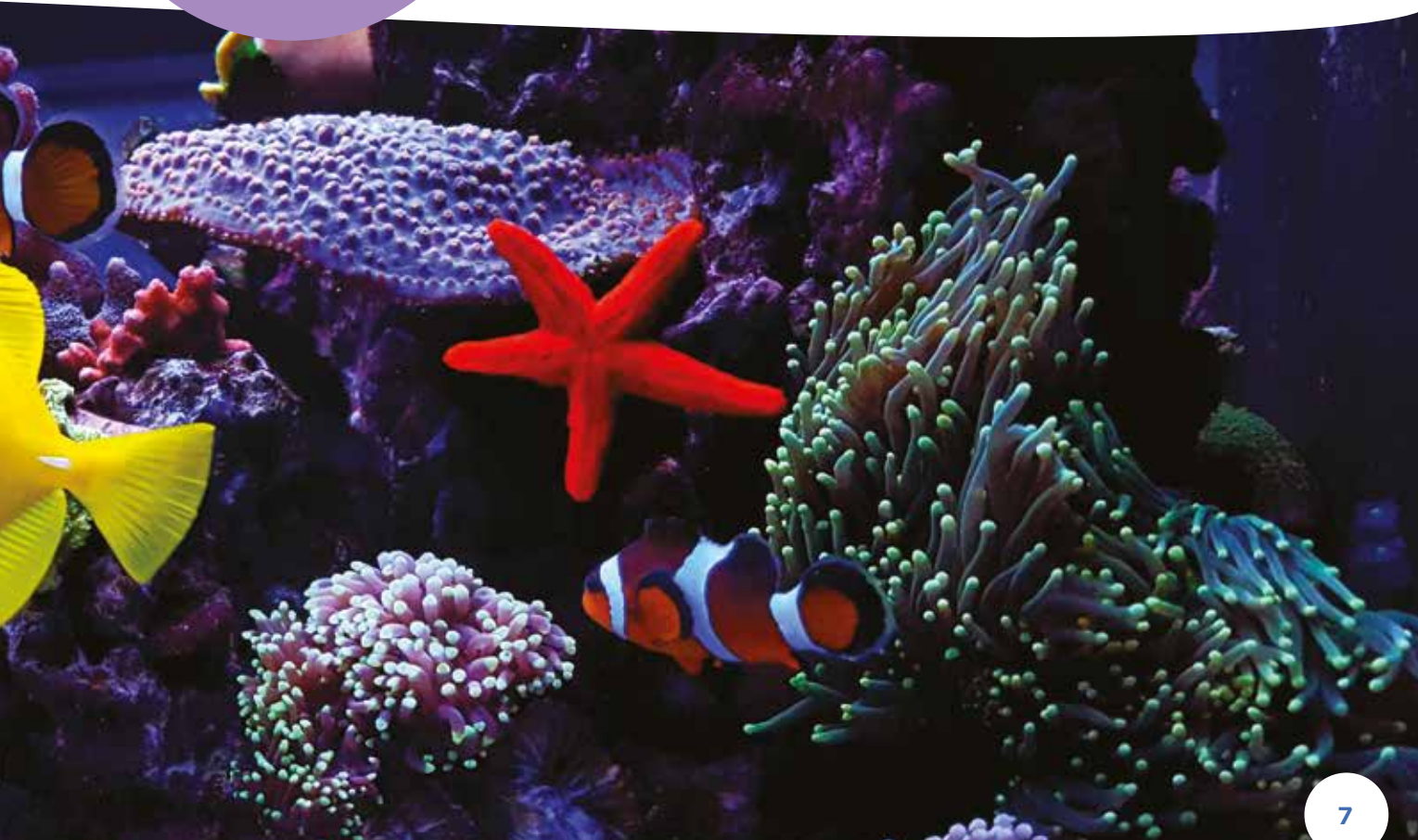
**WE LAUNCHED THREE
NEW GUIDES COVERING
ELECTRICAL GOODS,
PRODUCT SAFETY AND
FAIR TRADING TO HELP
BUSINESSES**

Brexit advice

We have been lobbying Defra for advice for our industry in the event of a no-deal and this was finally launched in March 2019, although we continue to highlight areas of incorrect information within it. This is very worrying as we approach the next deadline for leaving the European Union. We have also been supported by our Director Kevin Barton who has represented industry views on the Government's Business Reference Panel and Trade Facilitation Experts' Panel where he has raised important issues around the lack of scrutiny goods bought online from across the globe get when they enter the UK through the international postal system. This is concerning for both product safety and evasion of relevant VAT and tariffs and we are hopeful there will be greater scrutiny of this in the near future by the Government.

Non-native training launched

During Invasive Species Week 2019 we launched our first training module on Invasive Non-Native Species and Biosecurity. The new course is aimed at retailers, pond & aquarium consultants, as well as fishkeepers and pond owners, to equip them with what they need to know to help identify invasive species, know what to do with them and take the right biosecurity measures to stop them spreading. It will also help those working in the industry to inspire confidence in their customers when they talk about choosing plants and fish for their ponds and aquariums and shows our commitment to raising awareness about the issues surrounding the proper care and disposal of species that might have the potential to cause problems in the UK.



Sustainable and legal trade

Support for new freshwater fish conservation programme



OTA is very proud to be a strategic partner of Shoal, a conservation programme for freshwater fish which launched in March 2019. This new initiative aims to engage a diverse range of organisations to 'accelerate and escalate action to save the most threatened fish and other freshwater species' and includes, perhaps for the first time for an initiative like this, industry representatives.

OTA, and several of its member businesses, were involved in the creation of this exciting new project which has already identified a number of schemes to support. These range from saving threatened Telestes fishes in Croatia and the hump-backed mahseer in Southern India to creating a conservation action plan for the Sulawesi's Ancient Lakes.

The tropical fish industry relies on a sustainable source of live fish for the aquarium trade so supporting this type of project exactly fits with our mission to be a sustainable industry, operating legally and to good welfare standards. While many of the tropical freshwater fish within the home aquarium industry are captive reared it is important to continue to be able to access sustainably caught wild fish to refresh genetic stock.

The conservation of freshwater aquatic species globally is also incredibly important for biodiversity, the livelihoods of those that depend on freshwater fisheries around the world and our own health and wellbeing so supporting this project will make a positive contribution to the long-term conservation of freshwater fish.

"We were happy to introduce a number of our member businesses to Shoal as well as active hobby societies because we knew they would be keen to get involved," said Dominic. "That's what's so great about Shoal – the wide range of partner organisations it has brought together from the conservation, public aquarium, hobby and trade sectors.

"The initiative presents an unmissable opportunity to secure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of freshwater fish which is of fundamental importance to the many businesses and people across the world whose livelihoods depend on them."

**FIND MORE
INFORMATION ABOUT
THIS EXCITING NEW
CONSERVATION PROJECT AT
SHOALCONSERVATION.ORG**



Invasive species

Invasive species continue to dominate our work, from presenting evidence to the European Commission on its latest list of species to ban from sale (which continue to include aquatic pond plants) to talking to MPs on the Environmental Audit Committee. Our message is always that we are supportive of stopping the sale of problematic invasive plants. But when there is little evidence to support a ban in the UK then we will fight to make that case. We have had some success with calling a timeout of the listing of Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) following our lobbying of Defra (including organising a meeting of officials and plant growers). This temporary reprieve came as a result of Defra's objections to the EU. But putting business cases together to show that water lettuce – put forward as an alternative to water hyacinth only a year or so ago by Defra – takes a lot of time for a small office like ours. So this is a considerable 'win' for us, and we thank the plant growers who joined us to make our case to the Defra team. However, Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) and Senegal tea plant (*Gymnocoronis spilanthoides*) were not so lucky and will now face a ban on sales.

CITES spotlight on marine species

While this year's CITES Convention of the Parties meeting in Sri Lanka was postponed, we were still ready for its reconvention later in the year in Geneva. We were particularly concerned by a proposal from the Swiss Government to hold a workshop to look at conservation and trade in marine ornamental species with the aim to inform future listing decisions. This is obviously a major concern for our industry. We worked with both Ornamental Fish International (OFI) and the European Pet Organization (EPO) to counter the unbalanced report submitted to the CITES Secretariat. In preparation for the COP, we also presented our views at the EU CITES stakeholder meeting on the scope of the workshop, making suggestions on how to ensure the agenda is balanced and the importance of involving trade representation in any workshop.

Conference talk

We presented the work our industry is doing to provide sustainable livelihoods with wild caught fish at a special symposium organised by Fisheries Society of the British Isles in July 2018. It's not often that industry is invited to present at these kinds of events so we were very pleased to have the chance to explain the good work our industry is doing. A follow-up paper written by our Assistant Chief Executive Dr Tracey King to correct misconceptions about the trade was also accepted for inclusion in a special symposium edition of the Journal of Fish Biology, a leading international, peer-review journal for scientists engaged in all aspects of fish biology.

Cyber crime

An important step forward in our fight to highlight the issue of illegal wildlife has been our involvement in the National Wildlife Crime Unit's Priority Delivery Group on Cyber-enabled Crime. Through this group we push for a more joined up approach among regulators to the enforcement of illegal activity and for advice on how we can present information that can be used evidentially. We've seen some success with Crimestoppers now including a Wildlife Crime tab to its online reporting feature. These are small steps but are important to show that our industry believes illegal trafficking – and not honest trade – is the real issue and we should not be tarred with the same brush.

THROUGH THIS GROUP
WE PUSH FOR A MORE
JOINED UP APPROACH
AMONG REGULATORS TO
THE ENFORCEMENT OF
ILLEGAL ACTIVITY



Working on animal welfare

Say no to goldfish at fairs

We had a fantastic response to our plea to say no to goldfish at fairs with our Facebook post being shared more than 350 times. Unfortunately giving away goldfish as prizes at fairgrounds is still prevalent and we believe it is a terrible way to get an introduction to the wonderful world of fishkeeping.

Goldfish can live for 20 years so people need time to get a tank or garden pond ready for the new arrival. Winning a fish at a fair means people have no time to do this important preparation. We also remain concerned at the lack of scrutiny by local authorities into the welfare of these animals when hanging at fairs waiting to be won.

We always urge people to refuse to accept prize live fish at fairs and we also called on local authorities to support our position that fish should not be given away in this way at places like fairgrounds. We want local authorities to check the terms of any licences issued to these businesses to make sure they comply with animal welfare standards.

OATA does not condone the use of live fish such as goldfish as prizes at places like fairs because it encourages people to take on pets on impulse, rather than researching and preparing for the fish's arrival.

"We know that in the past winning fish in this way may have been an introduction to the great hobby of fishkeeping but the world moves on," said Dominic. "Goldfish are great for those with big tanks or garden ponds but they live for a long time so they are quite a commitment to take on. Winning one at a fair is not the right way to take on a fish which can live for 20 years if well looked after.

"We feel strongly that anyone offering fish to the public should at least meet the conditions applied by the local council to pet shops in that area, such as water quality criteria. We cannot see how these conditions can be achieved in a fairground situation so would urge local authorities to use what powers they have to stop this practice continuing in their area."

**WINNING ONE AT A FAIR
IS NOT THE RIGHT WAY TO
TAKE ON A FISH WHICH
CAN LIVE FOR 20 YEARS IF
WELL LOOKED AFTER**



Advice on online selling

Our Chief Executive Dominic has taken on the chair of a new Exotic Species sub-group of the Pet Advertising Advisory Group (PAAG). The sub-group helps websites which sell animals by providing information on what species cannot be sold in the UK, the regulatory requirements which should be included in any advert and how to provide good care information to help people make informed decisions when they buy their pet online.

New pet-keeping certificate

We continue to work with The Pet Charity to promote responsible pet ownership. We believe educating people to pick the right pet for their lifestyle and care for it properly is the key to happy and healthy pets. This year the Charity has entered into an agreement with British Small Animal Veterinary Association and the British Veterinary Zoological Society to create a new pet-keeping certificate to help new owners research their pet. The aim is to create a simple test for new owners to do about their pet which creates a certificate to print off to take to a pet shop to show the prospective owner has looked into the needs of the animal they want to take on as a pet.

**WE BELIEVE EDUCATING
PEOPLE TO PICK THE RIGHT
PET FOR THEIR LIFESTYLE
AND CARE FOR IT PROPERLY
IS THE KEY TO HAPPY AND
HEALTHY PETS.**



From the Chief Executive

OATA has a simple and clear vision to ensure a sustainable, legal trade delivering good welfare standards, a vision supported by our Board of Directors. Since joining I have sought to ensure that OATA is an organisation that is respected at home and abroad amongst key influencers and where our efforts as an industry are recognised and respected and where people actively seek to engage with us on matters of importance for our sector.

I was pleased to be re-appointed as Vice-President of the European Pet Organization as I believe that retaining a strong voice for our industry in Europe after Brexit will be very important in ensuring we retain a strong influence over existing and new EU policies, regardless of our future relationship with Europe. Globally, our close relationship with OFI helps to ensure that our industry has a strong voice in wider international debates such as discussions in CITES about the future management of the marine ornamental fish trade.

Similarly, our work with The Pet Charity in developing important public facing tools like the Pet Portal has been acknowledged

by key players in Government as an important channel through which we can demonstrate a coherent pet industry-wide approach to educate animal keepers and support responsible pet ownership.

We were honoured to be invited, under the patronage of Lord Sandy Trees, to assist in bringing together pet trade bodies, animal keeping groups, welfare charities and regulators to explore the development of a new sector council which will enable us to represent our views directly into the heart of Government ensuring we have a much greater influence over future animal welfare policies coming from Defra.

Working together through these bodies will, I believe, place our sector on a better footing in addressing the many challenges we face as an industry, not least from the growing pressures from the animal rights lobby.

Finally on the theme of working together we are proud to be a founding partner of the new global initiative Shoal, aimed at conserving freshwater species with a focus on fish. Our industry relies on sustainably

sourced fish so we hope this is something all our members can support.

In this report you will see some of the highlights of our work over the past year, none of which could have been achieved without the support of our members, the dedication of the OATA team (Ray, Pauline and Tracey) and the advice of our highly supportive Board of Directors. My thanks go to them all.



Dominic Whitmee

From the Chair

This has been my first year in the Chair after two years as Vice Chair and several years previously as a Board member. It's fair to say that a lot has happened over the past 12 months.

The year has been eventful for OATA. The new Animal Activities Licensing regulations in England have been a major thing to contend with, not just since its introduction in October, but also many months prior. The OATA team has worked tirelessly to try to help retailers adapt to the new regulations as smoothly as possible. This has been done by creating lots of fantastic guidance notes and templates to steer businesses through what could have been a maze of rules and red tape that we have not been previously tasked with. As a retailer myself I have been grateful for this information and as a result was fully prepared for my Pet Shop Licence inspection.

As a result of the new licensing conditions staff training and qualifications are vitally important. OATA has created a fantastic training resource that will put retailers on the front foot when it comes to satisfying the conditions when it comes to staff qualifications. I have seen how much work the team have put into this which has resulted in courses that are now City & Guild accredited which, in turn, give businesses added credibility.

This year, with Dominic and some other board members, I attended the launch of a new charity called Shoal. Shoal is an exciting new initiative aimed at engaging a wide range of organisations to grow and develop interest and funding for freshwater species conservation, particularly fish.

I also must say how impressed I am with the team at OATA and how they do so

much with so few resources. I have been more acutely aware of this over the past couple of years as Vice Chairman and now Chairman. They work incredibly hard and the trade, as a whole, should be glad they are fighting our battles.



Kevin Rose

About OATA

We believe OATA is an organisation that punches above its weight. Our small staff of four can only achieve what they do with the support of our voluntary Board of Directors who each brings their particular industry expertise to our work.

Our Board meets four times a year and we have a programme of New Blood, offering others the chance to take a seat at the table and see what it's like to be a Board member. If this interests you then email or talk to our Office Manager Ray Valovec.



STAFF

Dominic Whitmee
Chief Executive

Dr Tracey King
Assistant Chief Executive

Ray Valovec
Office Manager

Pauline Davey
PR & Parliamentary Officer (part-time)

Mark Evenden
Devotedly Discus Ltd

Caroline Everett
Anglo Aquatic Plants Co Ltd

Neil Hardy
Neil Hardy Aquatica Ltd

Simon Langdale
Maidenhead Aquatics @ Iver

Philip Lawton
Kidsgrove Tropicals

Simon Strobe
Tetra

Paul West
Cranswick Pet and Aquatics (Trading as
Tropical Marine Centre)

Ben Windeatt
Pets Choice

New Blood (non-voting)
Richard Maude
Pedigree Wholesale Ltd (stepped down
June 2019)

DIRECTORS (as at June 2019)

Kevin Rose
Chair
Lynchford Aquatics Ltd

James Allison
Aquapic Solutions

Kevin Barton
ALF (Aquatic Distributors) Ltd

Pete Carey
Pets at Home Ltd

Robert Edgecock
Independent Aquatic Imports Ltd

Ruth Low
Vice Chair
Gordon Low Products Ltd

David Pool
FishScience Ltd

Pete Smith
Aquasense (UK) Ltd

Dr Donna Snellgrove
Mars WALTHAM

Matthew Stevenson
Vice Chair
Seneye

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM is being held on
Wednesday 2 October 2019 at The
Manor, Weston-on-the-Green,
Oxfordshire, OX25 3QL. All OATA
members are welcome.

CONTACT OUR OFFICE

By phone on 01373 301353

By email on info@ornamentalfish.org

By writing to

OATA, Wessex House, 40 Station Road,
Westbury, Wiltshire, BA13 3JN

Join OATA – and feel the benefit

Strength in numbers

We make the voices of our members heard at local, European and even global levels by representing a broad range of businesses involved in the industry. Membership support is vital to our continued success and by joining OATA businesses help to keep the industry alive.

As a member you benefit from:

- Practical help and support to enable you to stay ahead of the competition, including a wide range of information to help with running a small business.
- Membership of our Primary Authority schemes which give OATA members robust advice which they can rely on (especially helpful to small business that do not have the money or expertise to tackle some of the regulatory issues they face.) You also have a regulatory authority supporting you if challenged about the advice you are following.
- Discounts on our City & Guilds accredited fishkeeping training programmes to give businesses the best-trained staff.
- A free audit of insurance arrangements to take the hassle out of getting the best cover.
- Safeguarding the future of industry and your business.

What does OATA do for the aquatic industry?

- We lobby and challenge UK, European and world bodies/governments to make sure fish/plants/invertebrates/dry goods/medications remain available for sale.
- We offer high quality training programmes on fish-keeping for staff and individuals which are recognised by local authorities.
- We seek to promote high standards of husbandry and welfare within the industry with our Code of Conduct and free point of sale information.
- We help our members to keep up-to-date with the latest news that could affect their business through our monthly e-newsletter and the broad range of information on our website.
- We promote the hobby of fishkeeping through our online videos, social media and our work with the press.

Find out more about becoming a member

Visit

www.ornamentalfish.org

**Give us a call on
01373 301353**



OATA is...

the voice of the ornamental aquatic industry in the UK



OATA has...

more than 850 business members from shops and importers to dry goods manufacturers, wholesalers and pond consultants



OATA's got...

global reach by representing the UK industry at European and world meetings.



OATA's behind...

the successful AQUA show in Telford – the biggest trade show in the UK just for the aquatics industry.



OATA's written...

free care sheets and leaflets for retailers to give to customers with all the information they need to keep a wide range of fish, marine invertebrates, plants and amphibians as well as how to set up ponds and aquaria.



OATA's filmed...

seven 'How to' videos for people wanting some advice on how to set up freshwater and marine aquaria and to keep fish successfully.



OATA's on...

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn where we share info about our work and the industry as a whole.



The voice of the ornamental fish industry



Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association Ltd

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Email: info@ornamentalfish.org

www.ornamentalfish.org

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