



ORNAMENTAL AQUATIC TRADE ASSOCIATION LTD

"The voice of the ornamental fish industry"

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Position statements

There are a number of practices OATA does not support. This is due to negative welfare implications for the species involved or damage to native ecosystems caused by potential illegal release. We recommend our members do not support (through sale or other means) any of the following:

- Dyed or tattooed fish
- Fish used as decorations
- Fish used as prizes
- Fish used in beauty treatments
- Inappropriate use of fish in cultural practices
- Genetically modified fish
- Use of live fish as food

Dyed and tattooed fish

OATA does not support the trade in dyed or tattooed ornamental fish and we recommend our members do not import or sell them.

Fish are dyed by a variety of processes including injection, tattooing or interfering with the skin by using lasers or chemicals so dye is readily absorbed. Even the outermost layer of fish skin is, unlike in humans, a living sensitive layer and makes this practice completely unacceptable.

It is a contradiction that it remains legal to import dyed or tattooed fish even though the processes used to produce them (even if legal in the country of origin) would attract criminal sanctions over animal cruelty if performed in the UK.

Fish as decorations

Retailers may receive requests to buy fish to be used for table decorations at parties or events, or to 'enhance' flower vases.

OATA recommends all members never knowingly sell fish if they are to be used for decoration in housing which does not meet their welfare needs.

This is an unacceptable way to treat a living creature and encourages the attitude 'it's only a fish'. It is cruel and we have concerns that the fish may be disposed of irresponsibly after use.

Fish as prizes

We do not support the use of fish such as goldfish as prizes at places like fairs. Local retailers have, in some cases, been inundated by members of the public wishing to know what should be done with the fish they have won.

Fish are living creatures and so anyone who wants to take on the responsibility of a pet should do so after careful consideration and research before the animal comes home. They should not be an impulse acquisition.

It is our view that any business offering fish to the public, whether a pet shop, garden centre or fairground, should meet the conditions laid out in the Licensing of Activities Involving Animals regulations for England, Scotland or Wales. We do not believe these conditions can be achieved in a fairground situation and that the conditions under which they are kept and displayed is cruel.

Fish used in beauty treatments

Fish can be used in beauty treatments to nibble on immersed skin.

Although the popularity for foot spas containing *Garra ruffa* and other species has decreased substantially over recent years, due to the potential welfare issues caused by this practice we do not recommend the sale of *Garra ruffa* or any similar species for foot spas or other cosmetic procedures.

This practise may cause them harm if they are exposed to perfumes, deodorants or medicated creams. Additionally, their welfare needs have to be met and so beauty salons would need to be fully equipped and educated to care for these animals.

Fish used in cultural practices

We are aware that at certain times of the year wholesalers and retailers receive requests from customers wanting to buy large amounts of fish (like goldfish, and also lobsters) to be used for cultural practices, e.g. temporary display or prayer release involving the release of animals into the wild.

OATA recommends members never knowingly sell fish if they believe they are to be used for these purposes, because of concerns about animal welfare or illegal release into the wild. We are concerned about the welfare of the animals and in particular what happens to the animals after their temporary use because it encourages the attitude 'it's only a fish'. We are also particularly concerned that the animals may be disposed of irresponsibly after use, which is both cruel and illegal.

Genetically modified ornamental fish

Retailers may occasionally be offered genetically modified fish, including 'Glo-fish'. OATA strongly recommends all members never purchase, stock or sell fish which have been genetically modified.

This is because of potential animal welfare implications during their production and the potential ecological risks if they are illegally released into the wild.

Use of live fish as food

In some cases, predatory fish are offered live “feeder” fish as food items.

OATA is opposed to this practice because the prey fish may suffer a painful death and the predator may be at risk of contracting disease.

For most predatory species, suitable alternatives exist, such as large frozen feeds, dead or prepared foods making live feeding live unnecessary.

