

## Diseases in fish Article 15

### Everyday questions and some important answers

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For now this will be the last of the series of articles (15 in number), that we will post on our web site.

However I will of course in response to a need consider creating some more, if the questions and problems warrant it. You can reach me at [john@aquarium-gardening.com](mailto:john@aquarium-gardening.com)



*Clown, showing typical "white spots" of Oodinium infection*

Anyway, I decided to entitle this contribution "Everyday questions etc" as there is hardly a day passes, that I do not get an E-Mail or a phone call, referring to some of the questions that I will now give details of. I will also give my reply to these matters. I hope it will be helpful to some of you, if you happen to meet the same problem.

**Question.1)** *My saltwater fish are infected with a parasite, they are showing spots, but I do not know if it is marine "Ick" aka Cryptocaryon or Coral fish disease aka Amyloodinium?*

**Answer:** Firstly one should be aware that the "spots" in marine "Ick" are much larger and whiter than those for Coral Fish disease.

Furthermore, Amyloodinium, usually kills the first fish at least within a matter of hours of being observed. Further casualties can be expected in short order, if untreated. *Cryptocaryon*, typically takes 2-3 weeks progressively getting worse every couple of days, but seldom kills quickly.

In Coral Fish disease, the spots are small, often grey or yellow in colour, and cover the fish so that under light at the correct angle, they will resemble a sandpaper effect. Furthermore as they most usually in severe attacks, congregate also on the gills, one often will find an infected fish, gasping on the bottom of the tank (sometimes at the surface), desperately trying to get air. The parasites impede by their sheer numbers the passage through the gills of oxygen, as well as doing severe necrotic damage to the gills tissues.

For those of you who wish to read further into these two common parasites, so you may distinguish the difference, I would refer you to the previous articles in this series, in which I deal in detail with each of these two very common parasites. As each call to us is frantically directed to know, what to do, I may here give some pointers about treatment.

( Fish-Vet ) produce a product formerly called “No-Ick”. This product will eliminate *Cryptocaryon irritans* from fish, and is safe to use in a Reef Tank as it will NOT harm any Invertebrates. You can obtain this product from us, but because of the laws pertaining here and in the EEC, you will need to visit us with the fish and our local Veterinary surgeon, will have to concur in the diagnosis and write a prescription for this product. As already mentioned, the progression of this disease, is such that one usually has time to call the store and order the product. Of course the quicker one begins treatment, the surer the cure, and the less damage to the fish.

However in the case of *Amyloodinium*, the progression of the disease is so rapid, that unless one has a medication such as our “Revive”(also Reef safe) ready on hand, the chances of saving most of your fish is not high. Thus if you have in your tank a considerable investment in fish, it is certainly worth the investment to have a bottle handy so that if you do experience this devastating parasite, you have the odds stacked in your favour. “Revive” can cure this scourge, in about one day, as it is lethal to the parasite.

**Question 2).** *I think I have more than disease in my tank, possibly Cryptocaryon irritans, as well as Amyloodinium, and even a bacterial infection. Can I use remedies simultaneously?*

**Answer :** I am sure we get asked this question several times each week. This is our considered reply, based on thousands of case histories.

First determine what the problem is. It is rare to have both parasites simultaneously in your aquarium. However if you are quite sure that you do, then treat first for *Amyloodinium*, with “Revive”, as the progression of this infestation is so fast, that all the fish will be dead unless treated immediately.

Do **NOT** use “No-Ick” and “Revive” at the same time. This can lead to problems of interaction under some circumstances, and we cannot determine, the subtle differences that will cause a problem in one set-up and not another. As “Revive” only needs 2-3 days to totally eliminate the Coral fish disease parasite, and as Marine “Ick” takes much longer to cause fatalities, you have time to pursue this course of action.

It is important with both medications NOT to use your skimmer, or any charcoal filtration during treatment, as either or both of these, will remove some of the active ingredients, and thus make them less effective.

After treating with “Revive” for 3 days, turn on your skimmer, and use a good brand of activated charcoal in your filter, for about 12 hours, to remove any residual medication. Then add “No-Ick” and treat as directed. Again turn off the skimmer, and remove charcoal from the filter, until the treatment is completed, and the *C.irritans* parasite has completely disappeared, whichever is the longer.

In the event that the “conflict” of disease, is between *C.irritans* (by far the most common of the 2 parasites), and a bacterial infection, with signs of bloody lesions etc, on the sides or elsewhere on the fish, act as follows:- I always recommend to first treat for the parasite, and when this is completed, to remove the “No-Ick” in the manner described above, then treat with “Revive” for the infection.

“Revive” is effective against not only *Amyloodinium* but also is an excellent antibacterial agent for gram negative bacteria, which are the causative organisms for the majority of those bacterial infections which we find in the aquarium. It also is very effective against many gill flukes as well.

**Question 3).** *Should I use my UV lamp during treatment, and can I continue to add various additives?*

**Answer:** Although we have had examples from several Hobbyists, where they have used their UV lamp without problems during treatment with “No-Ick” , there is in the literature some evidence, that there can be an unfavourable interaction between the rays of the lamp, and the active ingredients. Therefore we have warned against their simultaneous use. As I have already said, we know of many cases,



*Freshwater fish with fine "salt and pepper" dust showing on the skin. Fish is infected with Oodinium pilluri s the freshwater form of Amyloodinium . The appearance is almost identical, and I do not have a good photo of a saltwater fish with the spots showing.*

which have caused no problem, but it safer to err on the side of caution. I would also point out, that UV lamps will have no effect whatsoever, on killing the parasites, so I really see no reason to feel worried about turning off the lamp for a couple of weeks. The lamp should also not be used if treating with “Revive” as one of the ingredients in “Revive” is very light sensitive.

As for the use of additives, such as trace elements, Kalkwasser etc, there is no reason at all not to continue with these, and in both our experience, as well as the hundreds of Hobbyists that have reported to us, have we had a single case of negative interactions.

**Question 4)** *Do you recommend, using “No”Ick” periodically as a prophylactic treatment in my show aquarium, and if so how often?*

**Answer:** Obviously prevention is better than cure. However I do not believe that once things are stable in the main show aquarium, that one should add our medication (or any other) as a preventative.

What I do advocate, is that every new purchase, of fish, or Invertebrates, or Live Rock etc, should be held in a small filtered quarantine tank for at least 2 weeks before being introduced to the main aquarium. This is the right place and time, to use the treatment, even if there are no signs of disease. If this regimen is followed then it is improbable that outbreaks of either parasite or bacteria will break out to cause you aggravation, losses and heartbreak.

Remember, when introducing new fish to an established tank, to do so in VERY subdued lighting, preferably in the evening. Do this as close to total darkness as you can manage. Leave off the lights for some 12 hours, and if practical move some rocks or other decorations, so that the existing inhabitants will pay more attention to searching out their favorite spot in the tank, and far less to the new arrivals. This greatly reduces stress, and the potential that this can cause an outbreak of disease.

It is important to be aware, that the *C. irritans* parasite has the capability to lie dormant for very long periods of time, below the epithelial layer (under the skin). It cannot be eliminated in this stage, by any treatment that we are aware of. However it also will seldom break out and cause a problem unless stress in the form of an intruder, as just mentioned, or adverse water chemistry causes it to feel it should seek a new host. By minimizing the chances of stress, one can protect your fish, from these infections to some degree at least.

Finally I would like to refer to the percentage of customers, who fail either with our, or other treatments. They are understandably upset when this occurs, and would like to know why.

In a large percentage of these failures we have been able to determine the likely reasons. There are still about 10-15% of such cases, where we are unable at this time to say with confidence that we know what is the reason. However for the vast majority of failures we can offer below, some guidelines as to the cause. ( failures amount to about 25% of total attempted treatments, so that 10-15% of these is only some 4-5%, of all outbreaks that we cannot explain)

Here are what we have ascertained as the major causes of “failed” treatments.

- **a)** A wrong diagnosis has been made. As everyone will realize, Aspirin will not cure a broken leg. Thus if you do not make the correct diagnosis, and use the wrong treatment, not only will you not effect a cure, but as any chemical can cause some stress, you will often make the problem worse.
- **b)** Treatment has been instituted, but the protein skimmer, and/or charcoal filtration has been continued. Depending on the efficacy of the skimmer and the amount and quality of the charcoal, much of the active ingredients of the treatment will be removed, thus ensuring a negative result.
- **c)** Many aquarists are unsure about the amount of water in their tank, and often forget to include the water in their sump etc. Also they sometimes do not allow for the water displaced by large amounts of live rock etc. Too little or too much medication, can have a negative effect. Too little will enable the parasite to continue its life cycle. Too much can have the effect of causing severe adverse effects in the fish. Before beginning treatment, it is most essential to calculate & then recheck the amount of water you are treating.
- **d)** The fish are in an advanced stage of infection, before treatment is begun. As you will all be aware, if we are ill, the quicker we get to a professional, and begin the correct treatment, the better our chances of a complete recovery. When one leaves the treatment too late, then it is very hard to bring back fish, that are already at death's door.

These reasons account for by far the majority of failures in treatment. Pay careful attention to them, as well as the points above, and your success, as well as your level of expertise will move into a high percentile. The satisfaction, not to mention the good feeling of saving your fish, and thus not losing money, will add enormously to your self confidence, and no doubt many fellow Hobbyists will seek you out to advise them also.

Some concluding remarks. Each week I receive many of E Mails, and even some phone calls, requesting advice or help related to problems that the Aquarist or their child is experiencing. The vast majority of these I respond to, as many of you can testify to. However I would like anyone who is requesting such advice to take into account the following ground rules.

Like most people on this earth, I have to make a living, which I and my colleagues do, as professional consultants working with fish, as well as producing our software products, and other products. So would appreciate if your inquiries can be to the point to save both of us time etc.

I also find myself irritated by a small percentage of E-Mails I receive, which state a problem, often with very poor grammar, and insufficient information, and give no signature at all.

I think most reasonable persons would agree, that nobody would phone or write to a doctor ask their advice, and expect FREE advice without even the courtesy of the doctor knowing who, or where they lived.

Often by far the best solution to these problems is to go to the store where one bought the fish. I do realize that some stores do not have a good background in fish disease, but if the anonymous questioner, gave their name and address, then often we are aware of a store who could advise them properly, that was near to their home.

It is often extremely difficult to diagnose a problem with the very limited amount of information we are given, and that is why we produced the **Fish-Vet software**, as seeing the “signs” is far more informative than descriptions. Each person can describe the same symptom in different language. Yet seeing the fish, will tell an experienced person the answer in a moment. This is why taking the fish to a competent store, is usually the most certain way to obtain meaningful advice. We of course with a great deal of experience can often make sense of a well stated problem, but often we get E Mails that say, “my fish won’t eat, please reply immediately”, and others in similar vein. No name, sometimes, not even the kind of fish in trouble. .

Sometimes when a matter is urgent, and you do not believe that your dealer is up to the task of giving you sound advice, then if you can take a photo, and send it along with your message, remembering to indicate in the body of the message, the format of the photo, i.e. GIF, TIFF, JPEG etc.

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