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Press release:

New Betta fish guidelines released by The Anabantoid Association of Great Britain.

There has been a recent surge in the keeping of Betta fish (aka Siamese fighting fish; *Betta splendens*) in the UK, thanks partly to the wide range of colourful varieties now available. There is, however, some confusion regarding appropriate husbandry conditions for this species, particularly regarding temperature requirements.

In order to avoid welfare issues, a Betta care-sheet has been compiled by the Anabantoid Association of Great Britain (AAGB) in conjunction with Dr Peter Burgess and other aquatics professionals. These guidelines are aimed primarily at the general fish-keeper, particularly novices who may decide to keep a *Betta* as their first pet fish.

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Guidelines for keeping Betta fish (*Betta splendens*) in captivity

Compiled by the Anabantoid Association of Great Britain
in association with Dr Peter Burgess

(1) Temperature. There is a misconception that Bettas do not need heated water. In fact, these fish, which originate from South East Asia, require warm temperatures of around 24-28 C, with minimal fluctuations. Hence, the Betta aquarium requires a suitable heater that is thermostatically regulated. Bettas that are kept too cold may appear sluggish, have poor appetites, and will be more prone to disease.

(2) Water quality. Bettas are no different to other fish in their requirements for good water quality. Adequate filtration should be installed, but avoid filters that cause excessive surface-water movement as Bettas are surface-breathing fish from slow-moving waters, and cultivated forms can be weak swimmers. Regular partial water changes (using dechlorinated tapwater) should be undertaken. Salt should not be added, except as a temporary treatment for certain disease conditions.

(3) Adequate space. For a single Betta, an absolute minimum water volume of 5 litres is recommended for long-term maintenance. Smaller volumes present a significant challenge in maintaining good, stable water conditions.

(4) Environmental enrichment. Wild Bettas are found in densely vegetated habitats hence their aquarium should contain live aquatic plants, such as java moss and floating/surface-growing species (e.g. *Ceratopteris thalictroides*) for surface cover. Adequate lighting is required to keep the plants healthy. Bare tanks or bowls may cause stress as the Betta will have nowhere to escape from perceived threats. The aquarium should have a close-fitting cover.

(5) Proper nutrition. Feed a good quality dry diet that delivers all the Betta's nutritional needs. Cultured live or frozen foods can also be given. Inferior diets will lead to nutritional deficiencies and digestive problems that may result in poor health and reduced longevity.

(6) Suitable tank-mates. A single male Betta can be kept alone or in a suitably-sized community aquarium containing placid species that won't attack his long fins (conversely, a male Betta may attack other fish with long fins - such as a male guppy). Never keep two or more adult male Bettas together as they will fight, often to the death. Male and female Bettas should not be housed together except for breeding purposes: they are likely to become aggressive with each other either before or after spawning. Breeding Bettas requires a lot of time and experience and many tanks are needed for raising the fry (which will eventually fight) although it is undoubtedly a rewarding and fascinating process.

For more information on keeping and breeding Bettas and other anabantoid fishes, visit: www.aagb.org