

MYSTERIOUS FISH DEATHS

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We have all had fish die for no apparent reason and it can really be frustrating not knowing what went wrong. After talking over a current problem at the June meeting, I think we can identify another of the mystery fish killers.

Several members lost fish at about the same time, and in all but one case, no apparent cause of death could be found. I lost 2 archerfish, 3 congo tetras, 3 tiger barbs and 1 Australian rainbow - all from the six-footer. Most died within two days. Needless to say, I tried to find out what was wrong. However, checks of pH, temperature, nitrite level, hardness and feedings all failed to show any abnormality apart from a slight drop in pH. Other members lost a variety of fish, also including congo tetras.

The problem seems to be related to the fact that all members who suffered losses had made water changes on the weekend preceding the deaths. I made a larger than usual change of about 20% of the six-footer and I didn't bother to age the water in any way. I usually make changes of 10 to 15 per cent in that tank, and as the volume of water involved is fairly large, it is not practicable to let the water stand. Not using water ager hasn't caused me any problems in the past, providing that the volume I have changed is a small percentage of the whole.

However, we have learned that as there has been a lot of rain lately, the Water Board has had to add a lot more chlorine to the town water to purify it for drinking. Although the Board denies that this leads to a higher residual chlorine level than normal (they aim at 1ppm), I am not convinced. The general consensus of opinion at the meeting was that new water with excessive chlorine looks like the culprit. In the past, I have noticed that Australian rainbows and tiger barbs seem to be sensitive to too much new water and the books say that both archers and congos prefer mature water.

The moral of the story? If you can't age the water by letting it stand for a day or two, use some type of water ager when making large changes or when the weather has been wet and runoff is likely to be particularly dirty. A cheap water ager can be made by dissolving a teaspoon of HYPO (sodium thiosulphate or sodium hyposulphite) in an ounce (30ml) of water. Use ten to fifteen drops of this solution per 2 gallon bucket of water.

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