

Aequidens portalegrensis

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Aequidens portalegrensis is a fairly peaceful species which can live with Rainbows and African or American Cichlids. Digging activity is relatively slight and plants are left undisturbed unless they fall foul of the fish at spawning time. The type of environment does not seem to effect the behaviour of the pair, they will spawn in anything from a bare tank to a heavily planted one. I purchased this species in Sydney from two separate blood lines and are now about 15 months old and 130mm long.

In spite of their quiet nature, *A. portalegrensis* indulge in a highly visual courtship. Fin spreading displays, wagging the body and circling are very common. Mouth tugging also occurs and appears to be part of the courtship rather than just an aggressive display.

During mating and spawning, the body colour can change constantly. At certain stages the body may appear pale white with slight longitudinal markings, but then change to a light grey with vertical bands. The fins also exhibit a range of hues: at some stages showing red and blue tips to the dorsal and tail fin while at other times these same appendages may be pale blue. The predominant pattern used during courtship has an area behind the pectoral fins, scales, tail and the ventral edge of the pectoral fin in red.

This pair have spawned on glass, plants, gravel and large rocks with a preference for the rocks; the eggs are always laid on the side of the rock facing the rear of the tank. Both parents protect and fan the spawn, alternating to feed and repel all other occupants of the tank regardless of size or species.

At this stage, rearing the fry has been impossible because the parents are too young; not reaching maturity until about two years of age. To aid growth I have placed the fish in community tanks in the hope that after some more growing they may make more satisfactory parents.

