



**NORTHERN GOLDFISH
& PONDKEEPERS
SOCIETY**
A Nationwide Society
NEWSLETTER



March 2020

The Winning Question in the BBC's Science Focus magazine in February.....

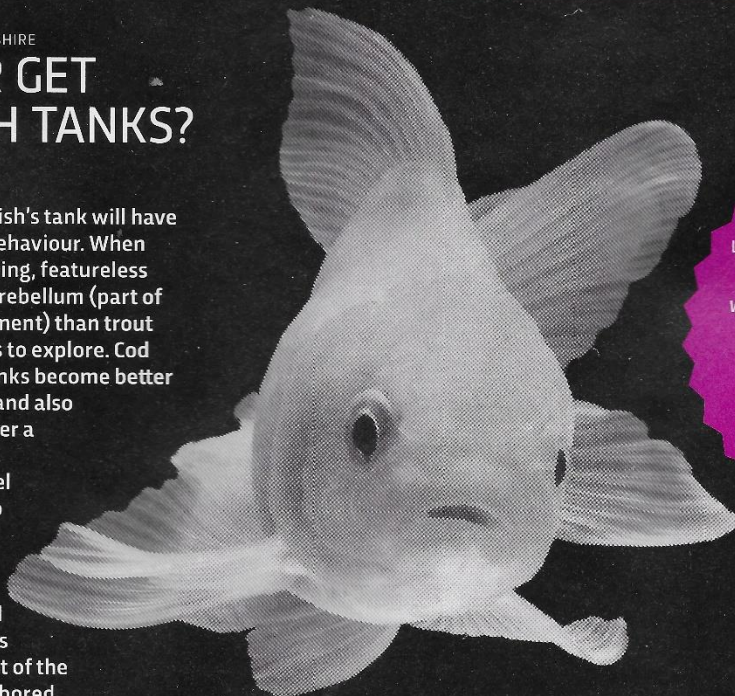
QUESTION OF THE MONTH

LUKAS HINDMARCH, NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

DO FISH EVER GET BORED IN FISH TANKS?

We know that the nature of a fish's tank will have an influence on its brain and behaviour. When young trout are reared in a boring, featureless tank they develop a smaller cerebellum (part of the brain that regulates movement) than trout that are given rocks and plants to explore. Cod reared in similarly enriched tanks become better at learning how to catch prey, and also recover quicker from stress after a simulated predator attack.

But whether fish actually feel bored in a way we can relate to is harder to work out. Fish-keepers sometimes see their pets 'glass surfing' – swimming repeatedly up and down the glass of the tank. This could be the aquatic equivalent of the pacing of a captive tiger that's bored from a lack of stimulation. But the fish could also be stressed from an overcrowded or unfamiliar tank. *HS*



WINNER

Lukas wins a bundle of stunning books by Rachel Ignotofsky, worth £51.96. The books include: *Women In Science*, *Women In Sports*, *Women In Art* and *The Wondrous Workings Of Planet Earth*. Featuring beautiful illustrations and stacks of fascinating stories and facts, these books are an absolute treat to read.

hachettechildrens.co.uk



EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO QUESTIONS@SCIENCEFOCUS.COM OR TWEET US [@SCIENCEFOCUSQA](https://twitter.com/SCIENCEFOCUSQA)

With feeding, breeding, showing, I think our members' Goldfish never get bored!

Nationwide News

After 5 years and 6 Open Shows the Nationwide Committee meet again!

This was at the original venue of Horsehay Village Hall in Telford, on Sunday 16th February 2020. Three of the four clubs attended, AMGK, BAS, NGPS but not NEGS because their reps were abroad.



LtoR: Andy Barton AMGK, Dean Roberts NGPS, Craig Clinton NGPS, Neil Coleman BAS, Sherridan Moores NGPS, Bob Jones BAS, Phil Riley AMGK, Pat Davies AMGK (and Chairman) Mick Smith AMGK, Ian Mildon BAS (I am behind the camera).

The purpose of the meeting was to develop a website for the Nationwide, a presentation of the development of the Butterfly Goldfish, training Judges, and organization of the Nationwide OS & Auction.

The Minutes of the Meeting should be published in the April issue of this Newsletter. Meanwhile – Jackie Pedley of AMGK gave a slide presentation of the Development of the Butterfly Goldfish, during the meeting.



The data was made into a folder for all delegates by June Kemp AMGK, this has been attached as a PDF to the email (*quod vide*).

More Nationwide News

The video of the 2019 Nationwide Open Show is available on YouTube. All the Goldfish, the Firsts and the Award Winners

are shown in a video that is more than an hour long. For those with YouTube click:

<https://youtu.be/kggAeW4NqjU>

The Nationwide Goldfish website is also live now – see it at:

<https://www.nationwidegoldfishsocieties.uk/>

Alex Stephenson Writes

Another archived article from our past member Alex Stephenson, his other ones can be found at the NGPS website in newsletters November 2018 p12, February 2019 p4 and December 2019 p7. This one is from 'The Aquarist & Pondkeeper' (which sadly is also no longer with us) July 1993. Alex was an artist as well as a philosopher.

HEALTH AND HAPLESSNESS

Alex Stephenson offers some personal thoughts on the complex and sometimes controversial matter of acclimatisation (quarantine) of new fish.

Illustration by the author

The editorial in *A & P* in January 1993 (*Goodbye Quarantine?*) started me thinking about the various measures we take when we acquire new fish. Most aquarists are, of course, familiar with the word 'quarantine'. The books we read recommend it and other fishkeepers advise it.

The trouble is that quarantine means different things to different people. To some, it can be as little as 48 hours' observation, while others practise a long period of isolation, during which prophylactic (preventive) treatments are given 'just in case'. In severe cases, a fish may swallow enough chemicals to pickle it!

To quarantine effectively, I think you need to be specific about what you are quarantining for. Is it an external parasite with a relatively short life cycle? If so, an isolation period of adequate duration, together with good hygiene and, if you insist, an appropriate prophylactic, should suffice.

The same regime, however, is unlikely to prove successful with many internal parasites, the problem being that they are difficult to get at. The commercial world has developed, and made available to hobbyists, preparations to deal with some internal nasties. Despite this, unless you suspect their presence, you are not going to use these treatments.

Diseases which a fish may be carrying could be of the seasonal type, or they might be of a kind which is slow to develop, only showing themselves when all the damage is done. How do you quarantine against such things?

For the average hobbyist, the answer is you can't. Average aquarists like us have neither the knowledge nor the facilities to enable us to make an accurate diagnosis of anything but the simplest complaints. As for post-mortems, very few hobbyists are qualified to determine 'cause of death'.

I think I am right in saying that importers of fish have been known to take a sample specimen from the stock, destroy it, and do a proper examination, presumably treating the remainder for whatever is found.

This is bad news for the specimen in question, but good news for the vast majority. These professionals must be applauded for their efforts to supply healthy stocks.

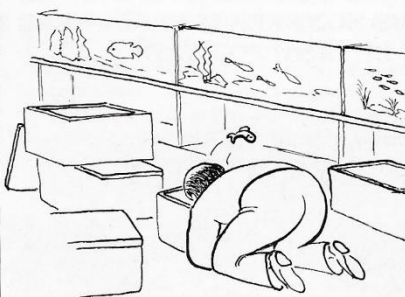
Wild-caught fish, by their very origins, must arrive complete with naturally occur-

ring pathogens and pests. You may therefore think their farm-bred counterparts would be safer in this respect. Not always so, I'm afraid, so establishments vary in the sort of conditions they provide... or can provide.

Even if the fish you have chosen to purchase has been born and reared in the finest possible conditions (as I'm sure many have), what has happened to it on the way to your reputable and caring retailer is anybody's guess. I am told that transit facilities can vary from clinical to septic.

Misdirected Flak

Retailers, it seems, get most of the 'flak' when it comes to apportioning blame for sick fish. There are bad ones, of course, but, mostly, retailers are even more concerned than we hobbyists about the health and condition of their stock.



Hang on a sec'. I think we've got a live one.

Think about it: it is their livelihood. The sight of sick, poor and unsellable fish is the last thing your local supplier wants. Unfortunately, when s(he) receives stocks, they can be in a very bad state, the rigours of travelling, and (probably) indifferent treatment at some point on the way, causing many of the problems that a supplier is going to have to deal with when the fish arrive. Dead fish do not make a profit, so rest assured that if your dealer is a good one, he or she cares.

From time to time, articles and letters appear in the press condemning the trade in general, and everybody in particular, for the quality and condition of imported fish. The

injured (quite naturally) retaliate and insults fly in all directions. I've seen the outlines of many sound arguments blurred by ruffled feathers. All such criticisms are born out of dissatisfaction with some of the fish currently offered to the hobby. Yet, I don't know anyone who says that things can't be improved (see, for example, the latest positive guidelines being offered by OFI [UK] in their *Code of Conduct*).

Perhaps it is simple economics. I have thought, rightly or wrongly, and for a very long time, that fish are too cheap. If more money was involved, would this help bring about a change in attitude towards their welfare? I have a strong suspicion that if fish were ten times the current price, they would get ten times the respect in some quarters.

Improving the Odds

So how do people like you and I go about increasing our chances of obtaining healthy fish? Well, it's a good idea to set up a good rapport with your chosen supplier(s). If s(he) isn't really interested, find one who is. Pick a time when business is light so you get the opportunity to talk. Discuss your requirements; ask for advice. You don't have to take it, but you are almost sure to learn something from the discussions.

When you are ready to buy fish, find out how long they have been in the shop. What problems has the retailer had with them? What treatments have they received? What are they being fed? Are there any special requirements you don't know about? If you ask intelligent questions, you will, hopefully, get intelligent answers.

Having got your fish home, you now have to decide what measures are to be taken regarding quarantine, acclimatisation, observation, or whatever you want to call it.

Remember, fish have an immune system, so it is reasonable to assume they have some resistance to 'bugs' they have met before. Your existing fish, all being healthy, are probably immune to the 'bugs' in your tanks, but the newcomer may not be.

A few days out of isolation you might find this latest acquisition looking as sick as Monty Python's parrot! The temptation may be to blame the supplier. In reality, you have exposed this fish to strains of organisms it's never had to deal with before. The problem didn't come in with the fish; you've probably had it all along.

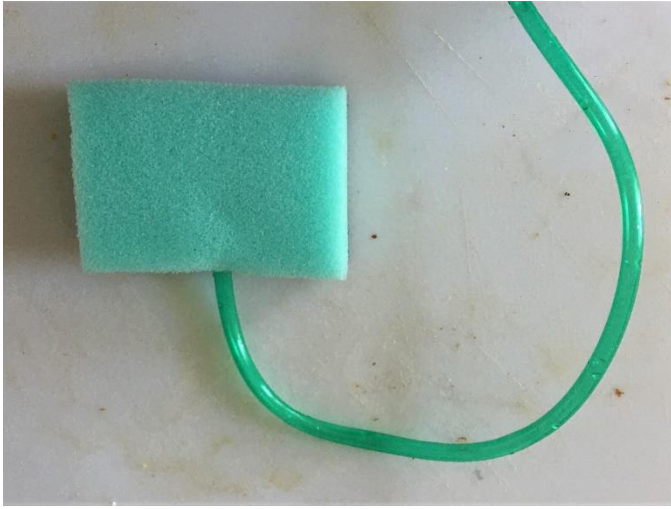
So this quarantine period is not only to safeguard your existing stock; it also allows you a period in which to prepare this latest fish for life in your colony.

There's nothing fanciful about this theory. Anyone who goes to 'foreign parts' knows the effects strange cuisine and conditions can have on their health. Robust and vigorous people can be virtually destroyed by the local Amoebae. I once fell victim to an unpleasant little germ in Watford...

Unless you have comprehensive facilities and an expert knowledge of fish diseases, the best you can ever hope to achieve is a clear conscience; a peace of mind which comes about when you genuinely know that you have done the best you can.

AGP

This Month's Top Tip



For a safe siphon when water changing in a fry tank. Use the Pound Store washing-up sponges, well rinsed to remove any

manufacturing chemicals, and make a small slit, half the depth, with a sharp knife. Insert a siphon tube (airline tubing is OK) and use it to remove water without disturbing the fry.

Squeeze the sponge in tapwater and suck on the tube to fill it with water.

Place in the fry tank and hold it down with a suitable weight (stone, spoon, tongs) and the siphon should begin with the open end below the tank's water level.

Slow but safe.

Minutes of the March Meeting

A good meeting, but I was not there and Sherridan agreed to write the Minutes but he is away until next week – hence they will be sent as an addendum then. Postal versions will have the Minutes added to their April meeting Newsletter. Don't forget it will be the AGM so annual subs are requested, send to Sherridan at 19 Manley Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 4EG, or bring them to the AGM.

That meeting will be at The Church Inn, Church Lane, Prestwich M25 1AN at 8pm Tuesday 14th April 2020.

