



Buy It. Sell It. Find It.

# Rearing arowana



## Buying an arowana

It is relatively easy to find a supply of *O. bicirrhosum*. However, you should ensure that the specimen you pick out is settled (that is, not freshly imported), and that the fish is feeding well.

On the other hand, the dragon fish are a protected species. This means that sale of these fish in most parts of the world is being banned. However, Singapore has been granted special permission to sell them, as they are captive-bred and therefore not a threat to the wild population.

There are many varieties of dragon fish, each of which may command a different price. The most common variety is the "Green" dragon fish, whilst the most revered are the "Red", "Axanthic" and "Albino".

Always ensure you buy fish from a reputable

source. Some suppliers have been known to use unethical methods to improve coloration. These methods include blinding, exposure to sunlight and the use of hormones. A reputable supplier employs bloodline control and careful selection techniques to ensure that the coloration is true, and that it will remain as the fish grows.

## Introducing arowana to the aquarium

Once you have selected your arowana, it must be properly introduced to the aquarium to ensure its survival.

Float the bag containing the fish on the surface for around 15 minutes to get it regulated to the temperature in the tank. Then, slowly fill the bag up with water from the tank over a period of 45 minutes. This will allow the fish to adjust to the water chemistry in the aquarium. Shocks brought about by temperature fluctuations,

hardness and acidity can cause stress or even worse, sudden death.

Do not feed your new fish for at least three days to reduce its expenditure of energy in combating stress. It is also a good idea to leave the aquarium lights off for a day or two.

Some dragon fish breeders recommend that a temperature of 30 deg C be maintained for the first week or so, in order to reduce the chances of bacterial infection. Alternatively, you can add a general anti-bacterial remedy to the aquarium.

After this period, reduce the temperature level to 27 deg C for the dragon fish and 25 deg C for the *O. bicirrhosum*.

## Feeding arowana

Both *O. bicirrhosum* and dragon fish are carnivores. In the wild, juveniles usually feed on smaller insects while the adults prey on other

fish. This diet must be replicated in captivity to keep an arowana in top form.

This can be done with fresh and live foods, and quality dry food. The disadvantages of live and fresh feed are a higher amount of waste produced, the risk of diseases carried by micro-organisms and the lack of certain essential vitamins and minerals. Thus, the diet should include dry feed as well. Some dry feed is based on large amounts of animal ingredients, such as shrimp and molluscs, in a highly digestible form. They may also contain essential nutrients and colour enhancers to keep arowanas in tip-top condition.

Juvenile arowana can be given dry feed two or three times a day, while adults only need one to two feedings. Occasional fresh food supplements, such as prawns, fish and live

cockroaches, are acceptable. However, always ensure that they are properly washed. Any uneaten food should be removed from the aquarium immediately.

## Maintaining the aquarium

Being large carnivores, arowanas can produce a lot of waste. Therefore, it is advisable to change a portion of the tank water once every week or two.

Change no more than 20 per cent of the water each time, ensure that the new batch of water is treated to remove chlorine and heavy metals, and that it is the same temperature as the water in the tank.

The gravel should be cleaned, ideally with the use of a gravel siphon, every few weeks. Adding a supplement to the water monthly can help to enhance the fish's health and coloration.

*This article is contributed by Rupert Bridges of Tetra Information Centre.*

*Photo courtesy of Tetra Aquatics Asia Pacific Pte Ltd*