

cichlid family

care sheet



There are over 1,200 species of cichlids, most of which originate in Central and South America and Africa. Cichlids are one of the most popular freshwater aquarium fish. They are known for their interesting behaviors, extroverted personalities and pleasing appearance.

facts

includes:	Central and South American and African species
average adult size:	2 to 14+ inches long, depending on species
average life span:	depends on species
diet:	omnivore
minimum aquarium size:	10+ gallons for dwarf cichlids only; 29+ gallons, depending on species
water temperature:	72 to 82°F



Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, refer to the Sources section or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.

Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

diet

A well-balanced cichlid diet consists of:

- Flakes, pellets, krill or frozen food.

feeding

Things to remember when feeding your cichlid:

- Depending on size and species, feed 1 to 2 times per day, no more than fish will consume in 1 to 2 minutes.
- Thaw frozen food before feeding.

housing

- Keep in an appropriately sized aquarium; provide plenty of substrate, rocks and hiding places.
- Stable water quality and parameters are critical to the health of aquatic life. If you are unsure of your water quality, Petco provides free water testing.

characteristics

- Most cichlids are highly territorial.
- Most species will spawn in captivity.
- Parents will care for and protect their young.

habitat maintenance

Daily - Check filter, water temperature and other equipment.

Weekly - Check water quality at least once a week.

Monthly - Change 10 to 25% of the total volume of water every 2 to 4 weeks or as needed.

Introduce new inhabitants to the aquarium gradually.

compatibility

Cichlids can become aggressive and territorial. Will eat small fish, so best if kept with similarly sized fish. Check Petco's Freshwater Compatibility Care Sheet for more information regarding your specific species.

signs of a healthy fish

- Clear eyes
- Healthy appetite
- Bright, even coloring
- Fins completely intact and undamaged

Avoid overcrowded conditions, which are a major cause of stress and disease. Maintain good water quality with regular water changes and adequate filtration.

red flags

- Loss of color or appetite
- Spots or fungus on body or mouth
- Cloudy eyes or pop-eye
- Elevated scales
- Labored respirations
- Erratic swimming
- Weight loss
- Bloating
- Hole in the head
- Lateral line erosion

If you notice any of these signs, test water quality and improve as necessary.

common health issues

Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Fin rot	Frayed or disintegrating fins; the base of the fins usually reddens.	Improve water quality; consult your aquatic veterinarian for treatment.
Fungus	White cottony growth and/or discoloration of the eyes.	Quarantine fish; use a commercial antifungal remedy as directed.
Bacterial infections	Cloudy eyes, open sores and/or reddening of the skin.	Improve water quality; use a commercial antibacterial remedy as directed.
Ich	White spots appear on fins and body; fish rubs against hard objects or swims awkwardly. Rapid respirations.	Quarantine fish immediately; use commercial ich remedy as directed.

shopping list for needed supplies

- Appropriately sized aquarium
- Appropriate food, dry and frozen
- Décor
- Water conditioner
- Filter
- Water test kit
- Full spectrum lighting
- Net
- Thermometer
- Freshwater substrate
- Heater
- Airline tubing
- Airstone
- Air pump
- Book about cichlids

sources

Ask a store partner about Petco's selection of books on cichlids and the variety of private brand products available for the care and happiness of your new pet. All private brand products carry a 100% money-back guarantee.

Because all aquatic life are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as *Atypical Mycobacterium* and *Salmonella*, always wash your hands before and after handling your aquatic life or habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of disease.

Pregnant women, children under the age of 5, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing or caring for aquatic life and should consider not having aquatic life as a pet.

Go to cdc.gov/healthypets and petco.com/caresheet for more information about aquatic life and disease.

This care sheet can cover the needs of other species. Go to petco.com for more information.

