



Breeding Angel Fish -

By far the most popular of all cichlids is the Angelfish. Having been known to the hobby for more than 100 years, it has become a symbol of aquarium fish keeping. Their relative ease in spawning has come about through the countless generations bred in captivity. Spawning can be easily accomplished, but as in most cases, the rearing of the young for some, is considered difficult.

When selecting breeders, it is advisable to purchase medium to medium large sized fish. Of course at this age, it is impossible to sex them, so a random selection of 4 or more would be advisable. (It is considered difficult at the best of times to sex angels, so take advice from those who have bred Angels before, because there are subtle sexual characteristics in older fish that can help in sexing them). Once a pair has been established, it is best to remove all other angels to prevent them from being beaten up. The minimum tank size that I would advise would be an 80 litre tank. It should be larger if other fish are present.

Angels breed on a vertical surface. They will normally find their own spot such as the corner of the tank, a filter or a broad leaf plant. Other spawning media can be given such as a large tile or upside down flower pots.

When mature, Angels will spawn whenever they want without any particular stimuli as with catfish or tetras. The first spawns are normally unsuccessful, so allow the fish to experiment and learn at least 4 or 5 times before trying to intervene. Angels are normally very good parents so removing the young from experienced parents is not essential. If the young are removed after they hatch, then the pair will normally spawn again every 2 to 3 weeks. If the young are left in with the parents, then they usually will not spawn again until the young are removed.

When the fry are free swimming (6-8 days after hatching), then they will accept newly hatched brine shrimp. For the purpose of rearing a large percentage of young, it is inappropriate to attempt to feed the fry on prepared dry or liquid foods. Angel fry require two feeds per day of live, mobile food for the first week. Frozen baby brine shrimp can be given after one week when the fry have learned to pick on anything that floats past. After about 4 weeks, when the fry begin to take the classical shape of an Angel, they can be weaned on to dry food. Some "experts" would be inclined to say that Angel fry can take to prepared foods at an earlier age. This unfortunately will result in poor growth and possibly loss of a percentage of fry due to the low digestibility of such foods. Also, the absence of various essential amino-acids and enzymes in prepared foods makes them a poor choice as a diet for fast growing fry of any fish species.

Young Angels suffer if overcrowded. Angels should be given a spacious tank with good filtration and very regular water changes. Poor fin structure and lack of good colour in young angels are typical signs of poor nutrition and over crowding. Given that Angel fry are well catered for, they should reach a body size of a 20 cent piece within 3 months (long fin varieties may take longer).