

08. Warning Signs

Told by: Captain Cory — Cleanup Sergeant

"No pellet left behind — and no warning sign, either. A fish that is unwell will tell you. You simply have to know how to look." — Captain Cory, from the gravel, barbels sweeping

Fish cannot tell you in words when something is wrong. But they show it — if you know what to look for.

- ◆ **Gasping at the surface:** Usually means low oxygen — check the filter and aeration first.
- ◆ **Fins held close to the body:** Healthy fish hold their fins open. Clamped fins mean something is wrong.
- ◆ **Hiding more than usual:** A fish that has stopped coming out at all may not be feeling well.
- ◆ **Not eating:** A fish refusing food for more than a day or two is telling you something.
- ◆ **Rubbing against objects:** A fish scratching itself against rocks is uncomfortable — check the water.
- ◆ **Sudden colour change:** Happy fish have bright, steady colours. Dull or pale means stress.
- ◆ **Spots or unusual patches:** Any new markings that weren't there before — ask a knowledgeable adult to take a look.
- ◆ **Swimming sideways or listing:** Needs help quickly. Tell a knowledgeable adult straight away.
- ◆ **Several fish unwell at once:** Almost always the water. Check the water first.

⚠ When fish seem unwell: check the water first. Always. If the water is fine and the fish still seems unhappy, ask a knowledgeable grown-up for help.

The Eight Golden Rules

From Yechiel's notebook:

01 Good water, stable water. Everything else depends on this. Clean, well-filtered, right temperature, and moving.

02 Enough oxygen. Moving water brings oxygen. Still water loses it. Keep the filter and aeration running.

03 The right temperature — keep it steady. Know what your fish needs. Then give it that, consistently, without sudden changes.

04 A working filter — treat it gently. The bacteria in there are doing the most important work in the tank. Don't kill them by accident.

05 Feed carefully. Less than you think. Uneaten food is pollution. Feed what disappears quickly, and stop.

06 Don't overcrowd. More fish, more problems. Give them space and a filter that can keep up.

07 Acclimate slowly. Every new fish deserves a gentle welcome. Float, drip, adjust. Never just pour.

08 Pay attention. The fish will show you when something is wrong. Look at them every day. Learn their normal.

"This water has opinions. I suggest you listen to them." — George