



New World Cichlids

Care Guide

A Fish for Every Aquarist

New World cichlids belong to the Family Cichlidae and are found throughout Central and South America, as well as Mexico and southern Texas. Size and temperament span the entire range from tiny to colossal, from peaceful to highly aggressive, and all points in between. Most are relatively easy to keep, and males of many species are brilliantly colored, especially when breeding. Many have almost human personalities and can develop into true pets. No matter what sized aquarium you own, what your level of experience is or what kind of water you have, there is a New World cichlid just right for you!

Natural Habitat

New World cichlids occur in every conceivable aquatic environment, from fast flowing streams, to quiet rivers, from lakes to backwaters and swamps, from freshwater to brackish to full saltwater. Habitat can include downed trees, boulder fields, caves, weed beds and open sand or mud flats. Always research fish you intend to keep and set up your aquarium appropriately before bringing them home.

Water Requirements

Because of the underlying geology, Central American cichlids typically live in hard, alkaline water with a pH usually above 7.6. South American cichlids, on the other hand, tend to inhabit soft, more acidic waters with pH from 6.5 to 7.4. Water temperature ranges from mid-60's to well above 84° F, depending on location, although most species do best between 75° and 80° F. Most New World cichlids offered for sale are commercially raised and tolerate a wide range of water parameters. However, if you are interested in breeding your fish, it's best to research their natural environment and attempt to duplicate water conditions as closely as possible. If the aquarium is kept in a room below 75° F, use an Aqueon® Aquarium Heater to increase the temperature. Maintain good filtration and change 10% of the water every week or 25% every 2 weeks using an Aqueon® Aquarium Water Changer or Siphon Vacuum Gravel Cleaner. Don't forget to treat tap water with Aqueon® Water Conditioner before refilling your aquarium!

Housing Recommendations

Cichlids need space, and since many New World cichlids get quite large, their homes need to be BIG! In addition, they can be messy eaters, so a high capacity filter is recommended. Structure in the form of rocks, driftwood, artificial décor and weighted plastic plants help establish territorial boundaries and maintain peace and harmony in the cichlid aquarium. Many New World cichlids dig, so live plants are not recommended. Rocks and other large objects should be properly

balanced or anchored to prevent them from falling and damaging the aquarium. Lighting should be subdued as many New World cichlids inhabit shady areas in the wild.

Behavior/Compatibility

Male New World cichlids – even small species – are territorial, especially towards one another. Care should be taken when keeping mated pairs with other fish. Make sure there is plenty of space and cover, and be prepared to remove fish that are not compatible. Remember, what we think is a large aquarium in our home is small compared to the amount of space they are used to in nature. Also, unless you are buying mature adults, the fish you bring home will usually grow considerably. When mixing different species of cichlids, try to purchase juveniles so they accept each other as they grow and mature. Hobbyists sometimes mix New World cichlids with those from Africa, and while this can work, case by case compatibility is difficult to predict. Non-cichlid aquarium mates should include active fish that are in the same size range as their cichlid aquarium mates. Always consult an aquarium expert before buying any new fish for your aquarium.

Feeding

Most New World cichlids are either carnivores or omnivores and should be fed a variety of high-quality foods. For smaller species and juveniles, feed Aqueon® Tropical Flakes or Tropical Color Flakes until they mature into adulthood. For herbivorous cichlids, Aqueon® Spirulina Flakes are a good source of nutrition for all life stages. As cichlids grow, so should their food. Large New World cichlids can be fed Aqueon® Cichlid Pellets, Tropical Granules or Aqueon® Monster Fish Medley. Avoid feeding your cichlids live goldfish or other feeder fish, as they are not nutritionally balanced, can potentially carry diseases, and may cause water quality problems. For best results, rotate your fishes' diet daily and feed only what they can consume in under 2 minutes, once or twice a day.

Breeding Level - Intermediate

When it comes to breeding behaviors of New World cichlids, spawning strategies vary from species to species, so it's best to research breeding for your specific fish and proceed accordingly. Many New World cichlids are easy to breed, and if left alone, they will do all the work! Others can be quite difficult, and success requires time, patience and perseverance. Eggs are typically laid on a solid surface and are diligently cared for by one or both parents. Young or inexperienced fish may eat their first batch or two of eggs, especially if they feel threatened by other fish in the aquarium. It is not necessary to remove eggs after they are laid – in fact, you will have better results if you let the parents raise them. Again, conduct research on each particular species.