

Cardinalfish

Pterapogon spp, Sphaeramia spp, and others



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Cardinalfish have two distinctive dorsal fins and can be found around the world. These slow-moving nocturnal fish make excellent additions to large community aquariums. Male cardinalfish incubate eggs in their mouths. Most species are well suited for beginning marine aquarists.



Is a cardinalfish the right choice for your aquarium?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I have room for an appropriate size aquarium.
- This cardinalfish would be compatible with my other aquarium inhabitants.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this cardinalfish.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this fish.

If you answered "Yes" to these statements, a cardinalfish may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a cardinalfish and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible aquarium care.

Average Size 2½ to 5+ inches long

Life Span Up to 5+ years with proper care

Diet Food may be flaked, tablet, frozen, or live
 Animal or plant matter
 Avoid exclusive food which is not nutritionally complete

Feeding Depending on species and size, feed small amounts two to three times daily, no more than fish will eat in three to five minutes
 Thaw frozen foods before feeding

Housing Two gallons or more per fish inch is recommended for saltwater aquariums with a minimum aquarium size of 30 gallons and appropriate filtration to maintain a stable environment
 Saltwater fish require more space and better water quality than freshwater fish
 Provide plants, rock, and décor for hiding places and plenty of room for movement
 Water temperature should range from 75° F. to 82° F.
 Salinity levels should range from 1.020 to 1.026

Stable water quality, water temperature, and pH levels are critical to the health of fish. If you are unsure of your water quality or pH levels, PETCO provides free water testing.

- Recommended Supplies**
- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate size aquarium | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate food | <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water conditioner | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrometer | <input type="checkbox"/> Décor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water test kit | <input type="checkbox"/> Aquarium salt | <input type="checkbox"/> Filter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer | <input type="checkbox"/> Full spectrum lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Net |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heater | <input type="checkbox"/> Protein skimmer | <input type="checkbox"/> Airstone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about cardinalfish or marine aquariums | | <input type="checkbox"/> Air pump |

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Characteristics Peaceful, some species can be kept in small groups of about five same-species fish in larger aquariums
Although nocturnal, cardinalfish can become used to daytime feeding and activity
May become aggressive toward same species in smaller aquariums

Habitat Maintenance Check filter, water temperature and other equipment daily
Check water quality at least once a week
Check salinity levels at least twice a week
Change 10–25% of the total volume of water every two to four weeks, or as needed
Introduce new fish to the aquarium gradually

Compatibility Compatible with dwarf angelfish, blennies, other cardinalfish, clownfish, gobies, and puffers
Can be compatible with large angelfish, damselfish, groupers, pseudochromis, tangs, and wrasses
May become aggressive in an overcrowded aquarium

Signs of a Healthy Fish

- Clear eyes
- Not aggressive
- Eats vigorously
- Clean in appearance

Common Health Issues

Health Issue (alpha)	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Fin Rot	Frayed or disintegrating fins; the base of the fins usually reddens	Improve water quality; commercial antibiotics may be effective
Marine Ich	Cysts on fins, gills, and skin; fasting; cloudy eyes; labored breathing; excess skin mucus; or pale skin	Treat entire aquarium with a copper-based parasite remedy and improve water quality; freshwater dips can dislodge the parasites

Signs of Illness

- Loss of color or appetite
- Listlessness
- Spots or fungus on body or mouth
- Labored breathing

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

Preventing Common Health Issues Avoid crowded conditions; they are a major cause of stress and disease
Maintain good water quality with regular water changes and adequate filtration

Sources *Marine Fishes* by Scott W. Michael
Saltwater Aquariums for Dummies by Gregory Skomal
The New Marine Aquarium by Michael S. Paletta

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