

African Cichlids

Includes electric blue johanni, red zebra, and livingston



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

There are over 1,200 species of cichlids, the majority of which are found in Africa. African cichlids are one of the most popular freshwater aquarium fish. They are known for their interesting behaviors, extroverted personalities, and pleasing appearances.



Is an African cichlid 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.
- The African cichlid would be compatible with my other aquarium inhabitants.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this African cichlid.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this fish.

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

Average Size 2 to 10+ inches long, depending on species

Life Span Depends on species

Diet Food may be flaked, dried, frozen, or live
Avoid exclusive food which is not nutritionally complete

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

Housing African cichlids should be kept in an appropriate size aquarium
Provide plenty of substrate, rocks, and hiding places, especially during spawning
Water temperature should range from 72° F. to 82° F.

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"/> Aquarium cover | <input type="checkbox"/> Net |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water conditioner | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate food | <input type="checkbox"/> Filter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water test kit | <input type="checkbox"/> Aquarium salt | <input type="checkbox"/> Décor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Airstone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heater | <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate | <input type="checkbox"/> Air pump |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about African cichlids or freshwater aquariums | | |

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Characteristics Expand fins and gill covers as defense mechanism
Can learn to recognize their mate, as well as their owner

Habitat Maintenance Check filter, other equipment and temperature daily
Check water quality at least once 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 Cichlids may become aggressive and territorial

Signs of a Healthy Fish

- Clear eyes
- Bright, even coloring
- Healthy appetite
- 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
Ich	White spots appear on fins and body; fish rubs against hard objects or swims awkwardly	Quarantine fish immediately. Use a commercial Ich remedy for at least two weeks

Signs of Illness

- Loss of color or appetite
- Erratic swimming
- Spots or fungus on body or mouth
- Frayed fins

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 *Aquarium Fish* by Dick Mills
Cichlids: A Complete Introduction by Dr. Robert J. Goldstein
Tropical Fish: Setting Up and Maintaining Fresh and Marine Aquaria by Reginald Dutta

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.