

# Plecostomus

*Hypostomus spp, Ancistrus spp, Xenocara spp, and others*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Plecos are well-known algae eaters that originated in the rivers of the Amazon jungle in South America. Plecos attach themselves to hard surfaces with specially adapted mouth parts. They are scavengers and will eat almost anything. Some plecos have stinging barbs. Recommended for beginning aquarists.



### Is a pleco 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.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this pleco.
- This pleco would be compatible with my other aquarium inhabitants.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this fish.

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

**Average Size** 4 to 12+ inches long, depending on species      **Life Span** Up to 2 years with proper care

**Diet** Algae and sinking algae wafers

Supplement with raw or cooked zucchini as a treat once or twice a week (raw zucchini should be anchored near the bottom of the aquarium) with a produce clip

**Feeding** Plecos need to be supplied food and will also scavenge

Feed at night

Feed one wafer per pleco; large plecos need more food, so they should receive more wafers

**Housing** They require less space than saltwater fish (about 1 inch of fish per one gallon of water)

Provide proper filtration to maintain health

Acrylic aquariums are not recommended for large plecos as they will scratch the acrylic

Water temperature should range from 72° F. to 82° F.

Driftwood is commonly used to maintain pH at slightly acidic levels

**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"/> Sinking algae wafers | <input type="checkbox"/> Filter   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water conditioner               | <input type="checkbox"/> Décor                | <input type="checkbox"/> Light    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water test kit                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Heater               | <input type="checkbox"/> Net      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate            | <input type="checkbox"/> Airstone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aquarium cover                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Produce clip         | <input type="checkbox"/> Air pump |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about freshwater aquariums |   |                                   |

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**Characteristics** Spend most of their time on the bottom or hanging from the side of the aquarium  
Attach to glass, rocks, and other hard surfaces with their mouths  
Very territorial  
Will uproot or eat most live plants  
Primarily nocturnal; a pleco that feeds during the day probably needs more food

**Habitat Maintenance** Check filter, other equipment, and water 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** Can be kept with most community fish  
Keep only one pleco per tank, unless two are introduced at the same time

**Signs of a Healthy Fish**

- Clear eyes
- Eats vigorously
- Remains on or near the bottom of the tank
- Attaches to the side of the aquarium or decorations

Common Health Issues	Health Issue (alpha)	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
	Cloudy Eye	Eyes are covered with white or gray slime and appear cloudy; fish may appear off-color and swim awkwardly	Improve water quality; antibacterial medication can ease discomfort and prevent re-infection
	Ich	White spots appear on fins and body; fish rubs against hard objects or swims awkwardly	Quarantine fish immediately; use commercial Ich remedy for at least two weeks

**Signs of Illness**

- Loss of appetite
- Feeding during the day
- Frayed fins
- Spots or fungus on body or mouth
- Cloudy eyes
- 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** *Aquarium Fish* by Ulrich Schliewen  
*The ASPCA Complete Guide to Pet Care* by David L. Carroll  
*The Simple Guide to Freshwater Aquariums* by David E. Boruchowitz

**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.