

# Starfish

*Includes various species*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

The unique appearance and bright coloring of starfish provide an appealing addition to aquariums. Their amazing ability to regenerate limbs or whole bodies make them fascinating inhabitants of a saltwater tank. Many species are relatively easy to maintain in a healthy aquarium.



### Is a starfish 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"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

- I have an appropriate size established saltwater reef aquarium.
- I understand starfish are very sensitive to water conditions.
- I will maintain the proper environment for starfish.
- I know starfish are best kept with community fish.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this starfish.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for the starfish.

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

**Average Size** Depends on species

**Life Span** Depends on species

**Diet** Many are carnivores and feed primarily on commercial frozen food (meat source)  
 Small starfish can eat micro-algae  
 Vitamins or trace supplements may also be given

**Feeding** Feed daily or weekly, depending on species; thaw frozen foods before feeding  
 Vary diet to maintain health, take care not to overfeed

**Housing** Starfish should be kept in the appropriate size aquarium for each species  
 Full spectrum lighting and strong filtration are essential  
 Water temperature should range from 72° F to 78° F  
 Salinity levels range from 1.020 to 1.026; a rapid change in salinity can damage the tube feet and vascular system of a starfish

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

- |                             |   |   |  |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Recommended Supplies</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> 30-gallon or larger aquarium   | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate food     | <input type="checkbox"/> Filters and Net |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Aquarium cover   | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Décor           |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Water test kit and conditioner   | <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate            | <input type="checkbox"/> Airstone        |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aquarium salt        | <input type="checkbox"/> Air pump        |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Protein skimmer  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrometer           | <input type="checkbox"/> Heater          |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Book about saltwater (marine) invertebrates or aquariums                 |   |  |
|                             | <input type="checkbox"/> PETCO Care Sheets: Water Quality; Nitrogen Cycle; Setting up an Aquarium |   |  |

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**Characteristics** Some species can be consumed by tank mates or can be difficult to keep  
Use of copper-based medications is toxic to invertebrates; remove starfish before treating fish in the aquarium

**Habitat Maintenance** Check filter, other equipment, and water temperature daily  
Test water quality weekly and salinity levels at least twice a week  
Change 10–25% of the total volume of water every two to four weeks, or as needed  
Provide stable décor and rocky crevices to simulate natural habitat  
Never place a starfish into an unstable water environment

**Compatibility** Starfish are compatible with most fish  
Harlequin shrimp and large sea stars prey on small starfish  
Starfish will pry open and eat bivalve mollusks (such as clams) or sea urchins

**Signs of a Healthy Starfish**

- No white spots or discoloration on body
- Retraction of tube feet when grabbed under water
- Rigid, taut body

**Common Health Issues**

Health Issue (alpha)	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Body or Surface Erosion	Poor quality water; nutrient deficiency	Test and treat water immediately; maintain proper diet

**Signs of Illness**

- Loss of color
- Disfigurement
- Spots or fungus on body

**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** *Hobbyist Guide to Marine Fish and Invertebrates* by Dr. Chris Andrews  
*Saltwater Aquariums for Dummies* by Gregory Skomal  
*The New Saltwater Aquarium Handbook* by George C. Blasiola

**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.