

# Tang

*Acanthurus spp*



## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Tangs are often called surgeonfish because of the scalpal-like spine at the base of the tail. The spine is used for self-defense and territorial battles. Tangs originated in the tropical south Pacific Ocean, and are often found in coral or rocky reefs. Recommended for experienced marine aquarists.



### Is a tang the right choice for your aquarium?

Yes	No	Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I have room for an appropriate size aquarium.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. This tang would be compatible with my other aquarium inhabitants.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I can commit to providing proper care for this tang.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this fish.

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

**Average Size** 6 to 12+ inches long, depending on species      **Life Span** Up to 5+ years with proper care

**Diet** Commercial algae or algae sheets  
Blanched leaf lettuce or spinach  
Marine flake or pelleted herbivore foods  
Bloodworms and brine shrimp (live or frozen)

**Feeding** Algae or algae sheets should always be present in the aquarium (attach to the side of the aquarium with a produce clip)  
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.**

<b>Recommended Supplies</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate size aquarium	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate food	<input type="checkbox"/> Décor
	<input type="checkbox"/> Water conditioner	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae or algae sheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Net
	<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"/> Airstone
	<input type="checkbox"/> Heater	<input type="checkbox"/> Protein skimmer	<input type="checkbox"/> Air pump
	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquarium cover	<input type="checkbox"/> Substrate	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydrometer
	<input type="checkbox"/> Book about marine fish or aquariums		<input type="checkbox"/> Produce clip

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**Characteristics** Usually solitary and territorial, will usually attack new aquarium inhabitants; attack by swinging their tail toward their target

Tend to inhabit all levels of the aquarium; can use their spine to wedge into a crevice

**Habitat Maintenance** Do not use a net to catch tangs; the tail spines can slice through the net and cut your hand; if you need to put your hand into the aquarium, watch tangs carefully

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; make sure the aquarium has a good current

Introduce new fish to the aquarium gradually

**Compatibility** Compatible with dwarf and large angelfish, blennies, clownfish, damselfish, eels, gobies, groupers, hawkfish, lionfish, pseudochromis, puffers, and wrasse

Can be compatible with cardinalfish and other tang species of different shapes and sizes, or with similar tang species in larger aquariums

Only keep one tang per aquarium, except in very large aquariums (100+ gallons)

**Signs of a Healthy Tang**

- Clear eyes
- Active swimming
- Eats vigorously
- Smooth in appearance

**Common Health Issues**

Health Issue (alpha)	Symptoms of Causes	Suggested Action
Head and Lateral Line Erosion (HLLE)	Holes develop on the head and down the lateral line.	Improve water quality. Increase greens in diet and add a vitamin supplement.
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 parasites.

**Signs of Illness**

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

**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**

*The Simple Guide to Marine Aquariums* by Jeffrey Kurtz

*The Tropical Marine Fish Survival Manual* by Gordon Kay

**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.