



PondScapes Atlanta



SICK FISH:

Part3: Parasite Treatments

Lots of different treatments exist for all the different pond problems. You could probably ask fifty people the same question and get fifty different answers. Because of our training and experience we like to think our answer is the right one.

We can't stress enough that before you get to this stage in treatment, you have to be absolutely sure that the water quality and other stress factors have been tested and addressed. The last thing the fish need is another problem from your kindness. Having given our last warning, on with the recommendations!

Salt is the single most important thing you can do for any parasite problem, and works on several different levels. The most important thing salt does is actually kill the parasite. All parasites have different life stages, and some are more susceptible than others. With Costia and Trichodina, the free-swimming phase just can't tolerate salt at all. They die, so no new parasites get on the fish, and TA DA!! Problem solved. The same thing happens with flukes, but you often need a much higher salt level, which can actually do more harm than good.

Another thing salt does is help the fish in its constant battle with osmotic pressure. Osmosis is when two liquids are trying to get to the same concentration of minerals and salts thru a membrane. Basically the water the fish swims in is less salty than the blood in the fish. At the gills (the membrane) the salt tries to get out of the body and the water tries to get in. So, the fish has to spend a lot of energy keeping the right amount of salt in its blood. When we introduce salt to the water, the differential in salt between the fish and the water is much less, and the fish has less of a struggle. The fish can now spend this extra energy on something else (immune system).

On top of all this salt is inexpensive and doesn't give you cancer like lots of other things can. You have to use non-iodized salt, Very important!! I've found that a salt solution of 0.3% works wonders. That's 3 pounds per 100 gallons of water. It's best if you disperse the salt evenly around the pond, don't dump it all in the filter. A higher concentration of salt can start to harm aquatic plants, and eventually the biological filter too. Unfortunately you'll have to get the salt level up to 0.6% to effect most flukes (6lb per 100 gallons). While these amounts may seem like a lot, sea water contains roughly twenty pounds per 100 gallons (2.0%)!!!

There is one more thing that helps with parasites, that is relatively simple and marginally cost effective: UV sterilization. In this situation water is pumped past a UV bulb. The water (and

parasites) are exposed to the light and forced back to the pond. Parasites are actually killed if exposed to the light for long enough. Different parasites have different tolerances. For small ponds (under 2000 gallons) this is an excellent option. Small units can range from \$200 to \$400 installed and can often be run with the existing pump. Larger ponds can use this option too, but it can be upwards of \$1000 and usually requires a separate pump.

So there you have it. Of course every situation is different. You should check with us first before you do anything drastic. Some folks seem to have chronic parasite problems, some never do, but one thing is for sure: Nobody likes parasites.

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