

Fish Over Break

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With spring break coming up, many of you are wondering how you can keep your fish healthy over this, or any, break. Thinking it is safe to assume that you have considered simply taking your fish home with you. And then there are so many of you who haven't thought that far ahead. Well luckily for you, here are a few plans that you may choose to use to help keep you and your fish less stressed.

What you do with your fish really depends what kind of fish you have. Example: If you have a 30 gallon tank with piranha, you probably shouldn't try to take the fish home, for a few reasons. On the other hand, if all you have is a lone Betta in a little bowl that would be something to take home with you. Basically if the fish needs the filter, the spaces, and the air pump, don't take it home, there are alternatives.

I really don't suggest taking any fish home for you on break, unless it is a necessity. First off, if you have a nicely kept tank, your fish have already adapted to the water chemistry in the tank, taking them away from that could cause undue stress, which leads to a weakening of the immune system, which in turn leads to negative effects on the fish (such as Ich). Beyond the water chemistry of the tank, the drive could take a huge toll on the fish, unless you within an hour of the campus.

If you really have to take the fish home, make sure you have all the necessary equipment for it. Also, take at least half of the water from its tank for when you set it up at home, this can lessen the effect of a water chemistry change. Leave the live plants, it's only a week, they will be alright. This is also a great chance to get some any gunk or uneaten food out of the substrate.

You obviously have to find something to put the fish in while you are transporting them. Your best bet is to go down to Wal-Mart and pick up a few of the bags they put fish in when you buy them. If you bought a Betta and you still have its cup, use that. Get a styrofoam cooler to put your fish in, this should help regulate the temperature. Put them in a place that you are sure they won't move around, if it is a bumpy ride, put the fish in you lap, this can help reduce the shock of the bumps.

Ok, for those of use who are leaving the fish here, here are some great tips. First of all, talk to your RA or maybe the CA to arrange it so you can have your filter, air pump and heater running over the break; if you can't have them on, the fish have to go home. Once you have that figured out, ask yourself what the fish eat. You really don't need to worry about algae eating fish, such as Plecos, Oto Cats, and some shrimp; they will continue to eat the algae. If you are concerned with them, go get some algae wafers from Wal-Mart, they run about \$3 for a bag.

If your fish is of the carnivorous variety and eats live food, you have the simplest solution of all. Simply get enough live food, such as ghost shrimp, to last them the break; most of the time they will only hunt them down if they are hungry. If not, we have more work to do.

For flake fish, as I call them, you have a few options. You can buy week feeders. They are normally little disks that the fish will eat off of if they get hungry. They sink to the bottom of a tank and are made for an event such as this. They may be a little costly, some running \$10, but most relatively cheap. They are a good way to solve the problem, but can make the tank messy.

There is always the option of an electronically timed feeder that dispenses a certain amount of food at timed intervals. I cannot comment on these because I have never come in contact with one. If it's an option that you want to pursue, go ahead and let me know how it works.

If you have live plants, the call on whether to leave the light on or not is up to you. I suggest leaving it on, a week of darkness could be devastating to a plant, but it depends on the plant.

Here are a few last minute tips in case you forget. Check the temp in the tank if you are leaving fish in it, and adjust it accordingly. Make sure that the hood on the tank is on securely, some fish are prone to jump. Probably change your filter cartridge before you leave, just in case. This one is important, check out your fish and see if they have any illnesses that you can notice. If they do, treat them appropriately and promptly. If you wait to get back, they will probably be dead by then. Do readings on your tank: ammonia, nitrate, nitrite, and ph. Make sure everything is good, you wont see them for about a week.