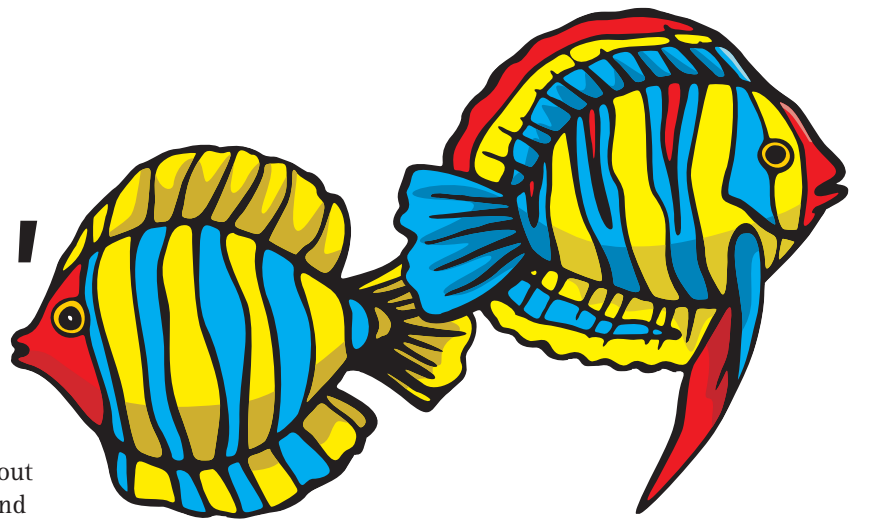


# Testing, testing, 1, 2, 3...

By Mark Berry



You know fish scare me yet fascinate me. I always had trouble balancing the chemicals in my parents pool as a teenager and created more than a few environmental disasters including a chlorine gas incident and various hair mutations. So it's no wonder I balked at the idea of balancing the environment in the smallest pool of all—a fish tank—because animals' lives hung in the balance.

It's possible to have a healthy tank without every buying a test kit but that's risky and unnecessary since today's testing devices are dead simple. They're useful for eliminating guesswork when fish appear stressed or die but are also crucial in keeping various water factors in check. They're both a preventative and diagnostic tool.

happen with too small a filter for the load, using antibiotics which kill good and bad bacteria as well as not cleaning the filter if clogging.

Nitrate testing is vital for tanks as these levels rise over time in the nitrogen cycle, especially where there are insufficient live plants to absorb nitrates. Nitrates are removed through regular water changes and testing can tell if you're removing them often enough.

Nitrite test kits are cheap and are also useful in checking levels that, like the ammonia spikes, happen when biological problems occur. Not to be confused with nitrates, it's a less vital test but makes your ability to detect changes in water quality more precise.

For those wanting to go up the fish geek scale a bit, there are two kits that test the hardness or softness of water. A GH or General Hardness kit is not that necessary as your water board can generally tell you this information or your local fish store, unless you're on bore water or using mineral water to fill the tank. The KH or Carbonate Hardness kit is another way of monitoring water quality as it is balanced with the pH. It's especially handy for plant enthusiasts and also if you're having pH stability problems.

Next issue we'll look at some of the unusual but common problems that occur over time with tanks

The most vital one is for pH which measures acidity and alkalinity, being the cheapest and simplest kit of all. There's no excuse to be without one as you need to know what water conditions from tap to tank over time are needed to be stable for the type of fish you have.

Ammonia test kits are also cheap and tell you whether your biological filter is working right and it will also tell you when the first phase of the nitrogen cycle has been completed. Ammonia problems can

**pets**  ON BROADWAY  
...the responsible pet people

**High quality German made Aquariums now available in Australia -**  
See the full range on our web site:  
[www.juwel.com.au](http://www.juwel.com.au)



**JUWEL AQUARIUM**

**BROADWAY** Shop 210 Broadway Shopping Centre  
1 Bay Street Broadway 9280 1624

**RHODES** Shop 25 Rhodes Shopping Centre  
1 Rider Blv Rhodes 9736 2100

## Take me home and turn me on!



**Red Sea MAX**  
The Complete Reef System

Introducing the first fully featured, plug-and-play reef aquarium that includes all of the technology necessary to grow a healthy reef at home. With the 130 litre Red Sea MAX, you can stop worrying about the equipment and start focusing on the joy and beauty of reefkeeping.

[www.redseamax.com](http://www.redseamax.com)



## Tank cleaning the easy way!

Add Goldfish Rocks to your fish bowl for a happy, healthy water environment.



• Reduced odours • A cleaner, healthier tank • Clean your bowl less often  
Call 1800 032 139 for your nearest stockist.



See dog section on page 8 for Dog Rocks!

[www.goldfishrocks.net](http://www.goldfishrocks.net)