

# Swordtails

## *Xiphophorus helleri*

Live bearing Tooth Carp Family  
or Poeciliidae.



### Natural Range

Swordtails are native from Mexico to Guatemala

### Maximum Size

Swordtails can grow up to 13cm.

### Water Quality

Livebearers generally require harder water with pH over neutral:

Temperature: 22°C - 27°C

pH: 6.5 – 7.8

General Hardness: 100 – 300 ppm

### Feeding

Swordtails are voracious feeders and will even readily eat their live offspring. They are top feeders and will readily take most artificial or frozen foods. However, they should be given a diet with high vegetable content and a dryfood like TETRA's Spirulina Tropical Flakes should be used occasionally. Live foods such as Daphnia or Mosquito larvae are also a favourite.

The fry are very easy to feed due to their large size, approximately about 7 to 10mm in length when born. They will feed on finely ground dry foods and do not require smaller live foods like most other species when beginning to feed.

### Compatibility

Swordtails are generally suitable for keeping in community tanks with other medium sized fish. It should be noted that when they are fully grown they can be very active and may out-compete some smaller or less active species for food. Some adult Swordtails can be aggressive and develop the habit of fin nipping.

### Colour and Varieties

Wild Swordtails are generally a dull green colour with a small extension to the tail fin. Selective breeding has produced a vast array of colour variations such as red, tuxedo, albino, green, red and white and numerous other colourations. The 'sword' extension of the tail of male fish has also been greatly enhanced in selectively bred fish, and more recently more elaborate fins has been developed such as Hi-Fin and Lyretails.

### Sexing

Mature male swordtails are easily identified by the long sword-like extension to their tail. The females also have a dark spot near the anus called the gravid spot – this is the area in which the fry develop before being born. Livebearers have the common trait that they give birth to free swimming young (ovoviparous), instead of egg laying like most other fishes. To achieve this, male livebearers have a modified anal fin called a gonopodium that is used to facilitate internal fertilization of the female. Once fertilised, the eggs mature inside the oviduct of the mother. The eggs then hatch internally and give 'birth' to the resultant offspring soon after.

Swordtails are prolific breeders and can produce up to 250 fry per brood. Successful breeding in a community tanks will generally occur with a well planted tank where the plants provide hiding places for the fry to escape from being eaten by other fish.

A note about breeding is that they are capable of hybridising with the closely related Platy (*X. maculatus*) and produce fertile offspring (hybrid offspring are generally infertile). This has been an important factor in developing the large colour variations seen in both species.



Pics: More elaborate fins such as the LyreTail (above) and HiFin (below) varieties have been selectively bred.



care sheet



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