

Handling Hazardous Fish

Some fish are venomous, and their sting can inflict very painful wounds. In the majority of cases these wounds are not life threatening. However some species, such as Lionfish, have been linked with deaths in humans. It should also be considered that different people may react differently to the venom.

If handled correctly the chances of wounds are minimal. Below you will find some general guidelines to their handling.

Remember:

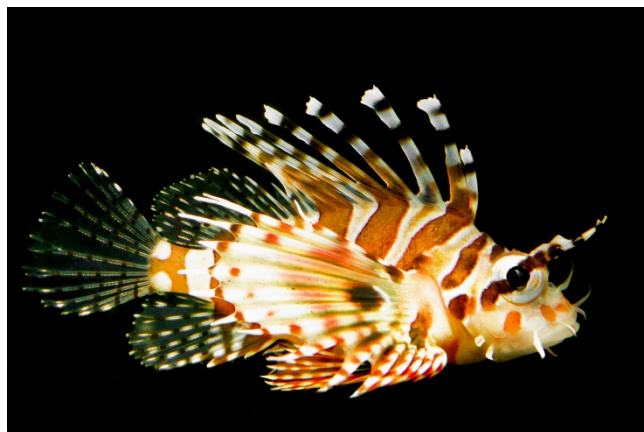
- Always handle with extreme caution.
- Always wear thick rubber gloves when handling.
- Always use the correct sized nets with long handles, and try to keep your hands as far away from the fish as possible.
- Do not place hands into the tank when feeding.
- Use aquarium tongs to move decorations etc that are in the tank.
- Avoid handling these fish when you are by yourself.

First aid:

Signs of a sting include intense pain, which starts at the site of the puncture and spreads along the affected limb. It may be followed by discoloration of the limb, swelling and sometimes sweating and shock. The casualty may become irrational. Immediately obtain a first aid officer or the next best qualified person. Perform the following first aid immediately:

Place the affected area in warm/hot water (approx 50°C) for about 30—90 minutes or until pain subsides. Heat breaks down the venom so the water should be as warm/hot as the casualty can stand on parts of the body not affected by the sting.

The warm/hot water may need to be topped up to maintain temperature. (**Caution:** do not test for heat tolerance on the stung limb – the pain there may be so intense that the casualty can not feel if they are being scalded).



Long Term First Aid:

Do NOT apply compression bandaging, as this will increase the pain.

Remove any foreign body such as a spine that can come away easily. Monitor breathing and circulation constantly and **seek medical aid immediately**.

Brackish / Freshwater fish which have venomous/dangerous spines include:

- Scats
- Bull Routs
- Tandanus, Corydoras, Pictus

Marine Fish which have venomous/dangerous spines include:

- Lionfish (Zebra, Volitan)
- Surgeon Fish
- Rabbitfish
- Triggerfish
- Stingrays

Further information:

Emergency Services

Dial 000

Poisons Information Service

Dial 13 11 26

The **Victorian Poisons Information Centre** website contains useful information about treating Fish Stings. Visit:

www.rch.org.au/poisons