

## Ramirezi Blue Cichlid

### *Mikrogeophagus ramirezi*



#### Common Names

Ram, Blue ram, Dwarf butterfly cichlid and Ramirez Blue

#### Natural Range

Orinoco Basin, South America.

#### Maximum Size and Longevity

Maximum size 4-6cm, with a life span of 4-5 years.

#### Water Quality

- Temperature: 24°C - 28°C.
- pH: 5.0– 7.2
- General Hardness: 50 ppm – 150 ppm

#### Feeding

Best suited to sinking based dry pellets, *M. ramirezi* will have few problems as long as their diet is varied. *M. ramirezi* will take most small live foods such as brine shrimp and black worms. When kept over a sand or fine substrate they spend hours sifting the sand through their gills, filtering out any edible matter they find.

#### Compatibility

Aggressive only when breeding.

Groups of peaceful, open water-dwelling fish are recommended as tank mates. This is because the presence of small schooling or shoaling species appears to indicate to *M. ramirezi* that there is no immediate threat in the vicinity, and therefore reduce its natural shyness.

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#### Colour and Varieties

*M. ramirezi* has a number of variants that range in colour and body shape. German and gold rams are known for their colour, while the balloon and long fin rams their different body shapes. Wild *M. ramirezi* are sought after as they have intense subtle colours.

The latest colour morph of *M. ramirezi*, the 'electric blue ram' (pic below) has proven to be a very popular addition to the hobby. It is slightly more difficult to keep, as selective breeding has made it more sensitive to poor water quality. Take care to ensure that water parameters are monitored regularly.



#### Sexing

*M. ramirezi* are often difficult to sex due to the large variation in quality. Adult males grow larger than females, and possess a slightly more extended dorsal fin, forming a crest. Most females possess a pinkish patch on the belly which is absent in males, and will also have one or many iridescent scales scattered on the dark spots below the dorsal, whereas the males spots will be solid black.

#### General Information

The *M. ramirezi* is one of the true gems of the cichlid family. It has all the beauty and character of the bigger South American cichlids, without the drawbacks like aggression, the need for a large territory and digging habits. If you're willing to put in the little extra time getting water quality right, you'll be rewarded with an experience you won't soon forget.