

White Spot

Ichthyophthirius multifiliis



White Spot, sometimes called “Ich”, is a parasitic disease.

It can be very hard to detect in its early stages, but as the parasite matures it can be seen as small white dots measuring about 1mm, which are present on the skin and fins. Affected fish may “flash”, or scrape themselves against surfaces. They may also develop a rapid breathing action.

If cells are wet prepped and viewed under a microscope, a distinctive rolling, creeping movement and rapidly beating cilia can be seen. Diseases which look to the naked eye like White Spot are not always Ich, so a microscope examination is preferred to ensure correct diagnosis.

There are a number of highly effective remedies which are of use when treatment commences early. However, delaying treatment may result in high losses.

Treatment

There are a number of steps to effective treatment:

1. Immediately test for and reduce stress factors such as poor water quality. Poor water quality is a major contributing factor in the development of a disease outbreak.
2. Water change, gravel vac and clean all filters.
3. Increase the temperature, even that of the water in goldfish tanks. Increased temperatures shorten the parasite life cycle and makes the cure more rapid.
4. There are a number of commercial White Spot treatments that can be used including Ichonex from Aquasonic, Aristopet's Rapid White Spot Remedy or Multicure, or Cuparamine from Seachem. Secondary bacterial infections can occur, so treat these with antibiotics as required. You may also like to use Formalin and Malachite Green (FMG) or Copper (Cu). **Care should be taken when using Copper, as it will kill invertebrates (such as Snails.)**

The available treatments attack the free swimming stage of the White Spot life cycle, not the mature “white spot” – so it may take several days for the spots to disappear. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for treatments, and

do not discontinue treatment early, just because the spots seem to have disappeared.

Prevention

Prevention is better than cure.

White spot typically affects fish under stress, as their immune system has been compromised. To minimise the chances of White Spot:

Feed a nutritious diet, which contains some variety.

Select a premium fish food, as they usually contain a higher nutritional content than cheaper foods. Supplement dry foods with frozen and live foods to ensure that a complete mix of vitamins and minerals is fed. This is especially important during winter months when the fish' immune system is under more pressure.

Check tank temperature, especially during cold weather.

In Southern parts of Australia, even Goldfish may require tank heaters during winter. Keep the temperature in Goldfish tanks above 16 deg, even during winter. Refer to the full range of Aquarium Industries' care sheets for the optimal temperature range for your fish.

Observe good hygiene and eliminate sources of contamination

Make sure nets are sterilised between use, as they are a common cause of cross-contamination. Isolate affected fish if possible.

Maintain good water quality!

Poor water quality contributes to 90% of fish health problems. Test tank water regularly, including pH, GH, Nitrates, Nitrites, Ammonia and Temperature. Aquarium Industries Care Sheets provide recommendations for the correct water parameters for hundreds of fish varieties.