

LIVE FOODS ONLY; A TRUTH OR A MYTH?

By Dan Kosta

During the time that I have been in the aquarium hobby I have seen many accounts that certain species will accept only live foods. In many cases this may well be true, but I have found that a number of species will take dried foods when live foods are not offered. Fishes such as Piranhas and Arowanas must have live foods but many others, despite reputations to the contrary, do not. This includes many of our natives.

I remember seeing a Largemouth Bass taking pelleted foods. This fish was kept in a large tank at a restaurant. The owner dropped the pellets into the tank one at a time, and the bass wasted little time in demolishing them. Feeding time ended with mopping up the water which the fish had splashed onto the floor.

I feed my fishes flake and freeze-dried foods almost exclusively during the winter months. When the weather warms and I can collect mosquito larvae and Gammarus my fishes receive a treat of a live meal. Sometimes they seem to have forgotten what live food is and will stare at the strange little creatures I have dropped into their tank. After a few moments, however, they get the idea and start gulping them down.

When I try converting a fish to dry foods I usually start by mixing a little dry food in with a nearly normal feeding of live food. Gradually I decrease the amount of live food and increase the portion of dry food. After a time, the fish usually accept a meal of only dry food.

I do not mean to say that live foods are unnecessary, as they do have a place in the feeding of fishes, but sometimes this place is overstated. When a fish spits out a mouthful of dry food it doesn't always mean that he won't eat it, it may be just because he doesn't recognize it as food. A gradual acclimation will usually do the trick. If not, try a little hunger.