Wet Pets N Critters

Water and Water Changes

Water is not just water. Understanding the different types of water can help you care for your fish more effectively.

Types of Water

Spring Water comes from underground springs. It can contain minerals and salts, depending on the source. While not always harmful to fish, spring water has a different chemistry than the tap water used in most aquariums, including ours. Fish at Wet Pets N Critters are used to tap water. Introducing fish to spring water without proper acclimation can cause stress, especially if the water chemistry changes between water changes. Stressed fish are more likely to get sick.

Distilled Water is produced by boiling water and collecting the vapor. This process removes all minerals and salts, leaving water that is too pure for fish. Fish need minerals and salts for good health, so distilled water is not recommended for regular use.

De-ionized Water is created by passing water through a resin that removes ions. This process, like distillation, results in water that lacks the minerals and salts fish need to thrive. Products like the "Tap Water Purifier" use this technology.

RO Water (Reverse Osmosis Water) is water that has passed through a membrane, which filters out almost everything except water molecules. At Wet Pets N Critters, our RO water is filtered through sediment and carbon filters, an RO membrane, and an ion exchange resin for extra purity.

If you use distilled, de-ionized, or RO water for freshwater aquariums, you will need to add back minerals, salts, and electrolytes essential for fish health. We carry a product called R/O Right by Kent Marine, which provides these elements. For saltwater tanks, extra minerals are not needed, as sea salt mixes already include what fish and corals require.

No matter what water you use, remember that **regular partial water changes are critical** for both freshwater and saltwater tanks. Simply topping off evaporated water is not enough, because only water evaporates—minerals, salts, and waste products stay behind. Replacing just evaporated water can lead to a buildup of these substances. The best method is to remove the same amount of water that has evaporated, then replace it with fresh water. If you are adding water back to a saltwater tank, using RO water ensures you are not adding more salts or minerals than necessary.

Why Change the Water?

Fish produce waste, and over time, this waste breaks down and lowers the pH of the water, making it more acidic. A low pH can stress fish and increase the risk of disease. Regular partial water changes replace old water

with new water that has a higher pH, helping maintain a balanced tank. For freshwater, the ideal pH is 7.0. For saltwater, the target pH is 8.2.

We recommend using a **gravel vacuum** during water changes. It removes waste, leftover food, decayed plants, and other debris the filter may have missed. Removing this waste helps keep the water clear, reduces odors, and prevents the pH from dropping.

Vacuuming also keeps the gravel loose. Nitrifying bacteria that help control ammonia and nitrite levels need oxygen, and they cannot survive if the gravel becomes packed down. Without enough good bacteria, the tank becomes unstable, and ammonia and nitrite levels can rise, which harms fish.

For **freshwater tanks**, we recommend a **33 percent water change at least once a month**. If you can do smaller water changes every week, even better—this is less stressful for your fish.

For **saltwater tanks**, regular nitrate tests will tell you how much and how often to change the water. However, a monthly water change is a good practice to avoid problems.

Why Use RO Water?

RO water is preferred not for what it contains, but for what it leaves out. It removes phosphates, nitrates, chlorine, and chloramines, which can all contribute to algae problems. If you have been dealing with brown algae or green and black hair algae, RO water is a good choice. We offer RO water at Wet Pets N Critters, with or without sea salt.

What You Will Need

- A gravel vacuum (available in different sizes)
- A bucket labeled for aquarium use only
- Chlorine remover
- A pH test kit
- A thermometer

When adding new water, make sure it is the same or slightly warmer than the existing tank water. Never add cooler water, as it can stress your fish and lead to disease such as ich.

Please Note

This guide is intended as an overview. For more details, we recommend consulting aquarium care books or asking our knowledgeable staff. We are happy to help and answer any questions you have.