

Case Scenario Template

Case author(s): Janice Lloyd

Scenario Theme: Aquatic Animals

Scenario Topic: Husbandry and Environmental Enrichment in ornamental (pet) fish

Name of client / Animal: Molly Black / 'M^cFin'

Age, sex, species/breed of patient(s): Approximately 6 month old goldfish, sex unknown

Patient's problem(s): Stressed fish with Swim Bladder Disorder and Ich

Presented as 'swimming in a lopsided manner'

Case ILO objectives: A1.1; A1.4; A1.5; A1.7; A1.9; B1.2; B1.3; B1.4; B1.8; C1.1; C1.2; C1.3; C1.18; C1.19

AW / Ethical challenges: Husbandry; Ownership; QoL

Background Information

A client, Molly Black, telephones your veterinary practice to inform you that her pet goldfish, 'M^cFin', appears listless and has recently begun to swim in a lop-sided manner. Molly informs you that her young daughter is very fond of this fish and would be "devastated" if the fish died.

You ask Molly if she can transport 'M^cFin' as soon, and as safely as possible, to your practice. You ensure that the fish be transported in a clear plastic bag containing water from its tank, and for this to be placed in a paper bag to protect 'M^cFin' from visual stressors.

Molly agrees and an appointment is made for later that day.

Background Information

There is an increasing amount of scientific discussion and evidence about the potential for negative events to cause pain and suffering in fish. However, not all states in Australia protect fish under animal welfare legislation. If it is accepted that fish are sentient and can experience pain, then there is an ethical obligation to treat fish humanely and avoid causing them pain, injury and suffering. This has significant impacts for the treatment of fish used for commercial and recreational purposes, as well as for fish kept as companion animals.

Goldfish are intelligent, social animals that interact with other fish and often their owners. The average life span of a goldfish provided with proper care is around 10-15 years, though many die sooner due to housing conditions that do not meet their behavioural and physiological needs.

Background Information

You recognise that you do not know a great deal about fish health and welfare, but you examine 'M^cFin' on arrival and observe that the fish is hanging at a 45⁰ angle just below the water surface. You also notice that there are a few white spots on its gills, body and fins. On questioning your client, you discover that 'M^cFin' is kept alone in a small, barren goldfish bowl, and the young daughter is chiefly responsible for feeding the fish and changing the water.

Instructions to students

Task:

You believe that 'M^cFin' is stressed from being kept in sub-optimal conditions and is suffering from Ich (white spot disease caused by a parasite) and the buoyancy problem is probably due to constipation from poor feeding. Discuss the animal health and welfare issues at hand, and describe how you would advise the client to improve the quality of life for this little fish.



Assessment:

You will receive a mark out of **xx** for your answer.

Model Answer

The answer should include attention to: diet, water quality and maintenance (hygiene, aeration, hardness, filtration, temperature, level of ammonia/nitrates/nitrites), photoperiod, space (how large will this fish grow?), and other environmental enrichment factors such as a hiding place, vegetation, activity (games, clicker training?), suitable companion fish/human interaction etc. Medication may also be prescribed. If necessary, the client needs to be carefully instructed on how to safely and humanely handle the fish and deliver the medication. The client should also be advised to closely supervise the care of the fish. A follow up appointment and/or phone call should be arranged. Ideally the veterinarian should consult with a colleague, or aquarist, who has more knowledge/experience with fish.