

I had an aquarium as a kid. As I recall, it was a 10-gallon, I had three small fish, and I don't really remember which type of fish I had. As I recall, I knew absolutely nothing about fishkeeping. I likely overfed them and neglected their water and upkeep.

So roughly 25 years later, with my Fiancee in tow, we decide to look at the fish at Walmart. Instantly, I fall in love with a beautiful pictus catfish, and she with a flowing blue betta. Still knowing absolutely nothing about fishkeeping, we purchase a very small (quarter gallon?) betta bowl with a built-in divider.

We take our prizes home, fill the tank, and put the betta in one side and the pictus in the other. I wanted to learn more about my pictus, so I did some googling, where I soon found out I was already way in over my head. This betta bowl was FAR too small to keep a pictus. So, I pull an old 1-gal glass jar out of the closet, treat some water, and my pictus just gained 8x as much real-estate.

We kept our fish status quo for about two weeks, when I convince the Fiancee, the pictus doesn't look happy. So off to Walmart we go. 45-minutes later, we're back home opening our brand new 10-gallon aquarium. I open the box, the glass is broken all on one side. So back to Walmart we go. After a successful exchange, we're off to the races.

Fast forward a couple weeks, the poor betta didn't make it in it's little betta bowl. But the pictus is doing fabulous all by itself in the 10-gallon. But it looks lonely. So off to Petco. Meredith picks a dwarf gourami, and I pick a second pictus. This will be good, Spot (the name I gave the first pictus) has a new friend named Rover (going with a dog's name theme), and Poseidon the dwarf gourami will keep watch.

About 4 days pass, the gourami gets very sick, has white spots. We rush to the store for meds, but it's too late, Poseidon expires. We continue to treat, but don't know what to think, one day later, Rover follows with Spot going soon after. What could possibly be the problem. Spirits are down, maybe we should give up pet fish. The inquisitive mind in me, decides to read online about what may have caused the white spots and all of the fish to die. Cycling? What could fish possibly have to do with the Tour de France?

Off to the pet store, let's buy a water quality testing kit. OHHH, so ammonia needs to be zero, nitrites zero, and nitrates around 2 and that'll be the all clear for adding new fish! This really seems complicated at first... but after a while, it becomes clear it's purely a matter of patience.... Wade and patience don't mix.

Lessons Learned:

- 1) Know the requirements of the fish you buy.
- 2) Do your homework... tanks have to cycle.
- 3) If at first you don't succeed.... blah blah blah... don't give up.
- 4) Don't name your fish, it'll just break your heart.