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KEEPING FISH AS PETS: PERCEPTIONS FROM FISH OWNERS IN NALLUR, JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

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Fishkeeping is a popular hobby worldwide. Owning a fish pet and caring for its welfare is known as pet fish ownership. National and district-level information on pet fish ownership is limited. The present study aimed to collect basic information on owners' perceptions of keeping pet fish and various preferences, potential constraints and challenges in aquarium keeping and possible recommendations for the identified constraints. A qualitative study was performed from September to December 2016, by using structured questionnaires from randomly selected home aquarium owners (n = 70). The findings reveal that those of the younger age category 6 - 15 (27%) and 16 - 25 (27%) were involved in ornamental fish guardianship. This study leads to the understanding that the surveyed respondents prefer freshwater medium (100%), glass tanks (86%), artificial feed (72%) and low-cost fancy fish such as Goldfish (17%), Guppy (15%), Dwarf Gourami (15%) and Angel (14%) in the household aquarium. Fish owners who responded to the survey reported that diseases, lack of proper knowledge in maintenance of aquarium fish, especially monitoring the changes of water quality, proper feeding, cleaning and cost for purchasing accessory equipment are the major challenges faced in pet fish ownership. The recommended solutions are the provision of proper awareness for fish owners through brochures, leaflets, videos and newspapers, development of paid jobs related to fish tank maintenance and promotion of animal welfare. Pet fish shops can educate buyers regarding management and maintenance of aquarium in the home.

Keywords: Aquarium, Ornamental fish, structured questionnaires

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