

WHAT ARE AQUA DRAGONS?

Aqua Dragons is a brand name for some amazing real live aquatic creatures that you can hatch and grow at home. Their scientific name is *Artemia salina* and they have been living in seas and salty lakes for millions of years; right back to when dinosaurs roamed the earth! Their very efficient way of living and reproducing has enabled them to survive to the present day almost exactly as they were 100 million years ago.

Aqua Dragons are live aquatic beings, from the crustacean family; they look a little like a sea horse with a curly tail, and their eggs have an amazing capacity called cryptobiosis which means they can be dried and stay alive only to hatch many years later. Tests have found that eggs kept in air sealed containers for up to 20 years still hatched when they were returned to water.

So the Aqua Dragons are real little time travellers which you can hatch and grow at home, waking them up from their hibernation in an exciting Aqua Dragons tank. Each Aqua Dragon has three eyes and a set of 11 legs, which work like gills to breathe, eat and guide their swimming in the water. The males have a mane on their heads which they use to hold the female when mating. The females are longer and are often seen with a bulb on their backs which is actually an egg sack; they are pregnant and carrying their babies with them.

Aqua Dragons are peaceful creatures...they never fight or bite! All they ask of us is to maintain their water at the right temperature, keep the water oxygenated, give them a bit of light, keep dirt out of the tank, including dirty fingers, and that we feed them. If we do this they can live peacefully and play in the water while we observe their life cycle, their anatomy and enjoy their company!

Each Aqua Dragons tank comes with full instructions, but here it is in a nutshell:

- Empty the full contents of the eggs sachet into the tank and add bottled spring water. Do not use tap water. If you are using one of our Aqua Dragon tanks then you will see there is a fill level indicator.
- If you are not using an Aqua Dragon tank then make sure that you use a completely clean container and use 380ml of bottled spring water.
- The ideal water temperature range for hatching is 21 to 27°C. It is important that the water is at this temperature in order for your Aqua Dragons to hatch and during the first delicate week of life. You could put the tank under a lamp to warm the water if you are concerned about the temperature. Ask an adult to help you with this. After a week the Aqua Dragons become stronger and the water temperature can be between 17 and 30°C.
- Your Aqua Dragons are starting to hatch already but they are microscopic so you can't see them yet. Wait two to three days.
- By the third day you should see some tiny white dots swimming, if you stir the water they

will try to swim against the current.

- Once a couple of days have passed since you saw the first hatchlings, you can feed them with a tiny level spoonful of food. Use the spoon included.

GENERAL ADVICE:

1. Always maintain your habitat at a stable temperature above 17°C inside your house. Cold isn't good, likewise strong and direct sunlight can overheat the tank.
2. Aqua Dragons need light to hatch and thrive, so try and make sure your Aqua Dragons get as much natural daylight as possible or keep in a well-lit area that is not in direct sunlight.
3. If the water level in the tank falls, normally due to some evaporation, add more water. Make sure you use bottled spring water that is at room temperature.
4. Feed every 2-5 days according to the amount of Aqua Dragons you have hatched and no dirty fingers in the water please! The number one reason for Aqua Dragon death is overfeeding. The contents of the food sachet should last for the life of your Aqua Dragons.
5. Care for these aquatic animals, they are living their one and only life and deserve your respect. In return you can observe their fascinating life cycle up close.
6. Oxygenate the water using the pipette. Squeeze and release the pipette to let air into the chamber. Put the pipette tip in the water and then squeeze again to blow the stored air into the water. Repeat this for 30 seconds each day.