

An Inside Look at the Marine Fish Industry: Collection and Handling

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

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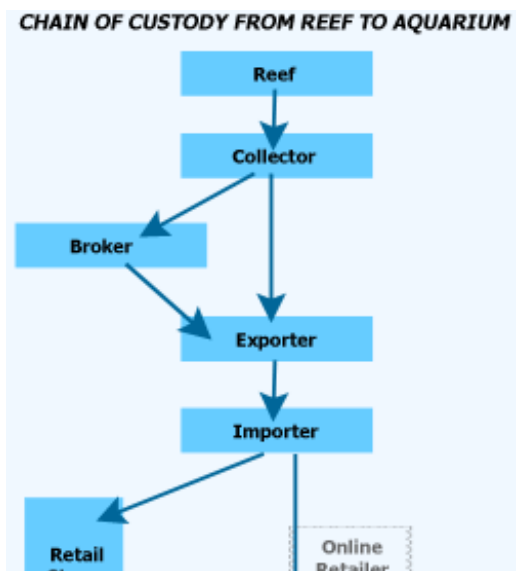


When asked where ornamental marine fish come from, the response for many would be either the "ocean" or the local pet store. Though it may seem like a simple question with a simple answer, many hobbyists are becoming more aware that the answer is not quite that simple. Knowing where your marine fish comes from, matters. The manner in which marine fish are caught and handled play an integral part in their health and longevity in the home aquarium.

For decades the live marine tropical fish industry has consisted of many different people and organizations, mostly from the vast chains of islands throughout the Indonesian and Philippine archipelago. The coral reef habitats of these island chains contain the greatest diversity of coral reef species in the entire world.

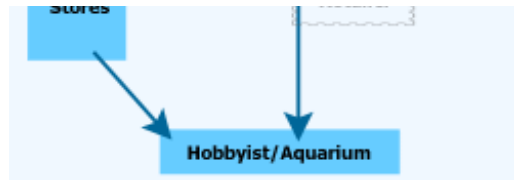
The Chain of Custody

- **Collection** - Most marine fish from these locations begin their journey with individual collectors who capture and then hold the catch for several days until the lot is sold. At this time, middlemen who routinely acquire fish from many different collectors, in different collection locations, purchase the fish. The middlemen then transport the fish, often over very long distances, by boat, truck, or other means to an export facility.
- **Export Facilities** - The major export facilities for marine tropical fish in these countries are located in: Manila, Philippines, Denpasar, Bali and Jakarta, Indonesia. The batches of fish are offered for sale to the exporter, who selects and then holds the fish again for a period of time depending on species desirability and current demand. At these export facilities, fish are usually maintained in filtered ocean water and sorted. Aggressive species are separated from each other and from more passive fish. The fish will then be consolidated and packaged for individual orders placed by importers/wholesalers in the United States, Europe



and Asia.

- **<Import Facilities** - The majority of tropical marine fish importers in the United States are located in Los Angeles, California. Although there are importers of marine fish across the United States, California is ideal due to its proximity to the Indo-Pacific. Most larger, well-established importers have modern and efficient filtration systems along with well-designed holding aquariums and cubicles to maintain optimum water conditions. The wholesaler/importer will maintain the marine life and fill orders for retailers where the fish are finally sold in local aquarium stores. The hobbyists will then purchase the fish and place the specimen in its final destination, the home aquarium.



Part 1
Collection &
Handling

Part 2
How Improper
Handling Affects
You

Part 3
What
Can You
Do?

Part 4
What
LiveAquaria.com is
Doing?



Kevin Kohen

Kevin Kohen is the Director of LiveAquaria.com and designed the Drs. Foster & Smith Aquaculture Coral & Marine Life Facility, and oversaw the installation of this state-of-the-art facility. Kevin oversees the operations of the facility and is actively involved in the husbandry and propagation of all of the aquatic life.