An Inside Look at the Marine Fish Industry: How Improper Handling Affects You and the Environment

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

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who's handling your fish?

The health of aquarium fish is directly related to the collection practices, holding and husbandry techniques, as well as proper packaging methods employed by everyone in the chain of distribution.

If fish are captured with chemicals or are overstocked in inadequate holding containers (e.g., overcrowded buckets or plastic bags without filtered water, oxygenation, or temperature stabilization) they are exposed to undue stress that directly affects their survivability and overall health.

- **Use of Chemicals** - For decades, the practice of capturing fish with chemicals such as cyanide has been routine for many collectors in the Philippines and has now spread to Indonesian waters as well. This collection method has a long lasting, detrimental effect on reef organisms and kills corals and other precious habitat. Some of the trained collectors in these regions only use nets for collection. But at this time, they are few in number, making it almost impossible to determine if a particular fish was net-caught without the use of chemicals.

- **Improper Handling** - Far too often, the collectors, middlemen, and exporters poorly handle many of these fish. Too many species of fish are improperly maintained and frequently packed or transported in less than ideal manners. Needless to say, the more hands that handle the fish in this manner, the greater the stress placed on them.

Because there are literally thousands of collectors and hundreds of middlemen and exporters in the Philippines and Indonesia alone, it is often difficult to determine if the utmost care was taken during every step along the journey to ensure the healthiest, best possible fish for the hobbyist.

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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.

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