



Seahorse Australia,

PO Box 363 Beauty Point,
Tasmania 7270,
Australia.

Ph: +61 3 6383 4811

Fax: +61 3 6383 4812

E-mail: info@seahorse-australia.com.au

WEB NOTES FROM: www.seahorse-australia.com.au

Breeding Notes

There are few things more graceful and intriguing to watch than the courtship dance of seahorses.

Dancing

It is usually the male who initiates the dancing. He 'pumps up' his belly, sometimes to enormous proportions, and parades before the female to entice her into dancing. If she is sufficiently wooed, she will join him in the dance where they will swim in tandem, sometimes linking tails. The female will curl her tail in a tight curl, and to exchange eggs they both suddenly stretch their necks up, and begin to swim toward the surface. The male will open his pouch and the female will deposit her eggs inside.

Gestation

The male immediately works to settle the eggs and will soon fertilise them. Gestation period is dependent on temperature. At 18°C, gestation is 30 days. If the temperature is higher, then the gestation period will be shorter, and vice versa. During gestation, the male will become more and more unsociable, and his pouch will grow fuller and darker.

Birth

When the time is right, (often at the onset of dawn), the male will begin what appear to be contractions. First, a couple of babies appear, and then clouds of babies just burst from his pouch and immediately swim away. The number of babies depends on the size of the male, and how successful the egg-transfer was during mating. The average number of offspring for a full-grown seahorse is 250, though could be as many as 1000. Smaller breeders usually have between 10-40 babies per birth.

Raising young

Baby pot-bellied seahorses can be raised on baby brine shrimp. These shrimp can be enriched to increase their nutrition profile. See your local Aquarium shop for brine shrimp eggs and hatching devices.

What do I need to breed my seahorses?

For breeding, seahorses do require some special treatment:

1. Nutrition. Ensure your females are producing good-quality eggs by feeding her high-energy food, such as frozen (or live) Mysid shrimp.
2. Tank depth. At least 50 cm is recommended for sub-adult seahorses to breed, and 1-m for full-grown adults.
3. Very Good Water Quality. Ensure the ammonia and nitrite are low, your temperature is stable around 18-20 oC, and salinity is between 20-35 ppt.

4. A small tank for your babies, as well as live baby brine shrimp.