“EGGBOUND” TETRAS

By Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Apr-May 2015

Pair of Black Neon Tetras, female possibly eggbound

The general feeling is that tetra females can become eggbound easily, especially if kept in water that is not soft. That is likely true in many cases, but sometimes we give up and don’t check thoroughly enough to try and spawn them. I am constantly reminded that, even though I have experience with tetras, I can always learn more.

RELUCTANT BREEDERS

Recently, I purchased a nice looking pair of Pristella maxillaris, the X-Ray Tetra. They were in excellent condition, good color, and the female appeared to be full of eggs. This looked like an easy spawn since this fish is not difficult to breed. Soon after, I moved the pair into a breeding setup. Normally, I keep breeder fish in my lower aquariums at about 72 or 73 degrees and to breed them, move the pair up into higher tanks at about 76 degrees. The increase in temperature often stimulates a pair to spawn, but this pair did not cooperate for over a week, so I returned them to the conditioning tank. The female looked quite full of eggs and I thought that she might be eggbound, but would give her one more chance, and a couple of weeks later moved the pair back to a breeding setup.

HIGH TEMPERATURES

After 5 more days with no eggs, I was about ready to give up, but it occurred to me that I might try increasing the temperature as a last resort. I placed a heater in the setup and gradually increased the temperature up to 84 degrees. Within a few hours, the pair was spawning! This and most other tetras normally spawn at a lower temperature than 84 degrees, but possibly the extra warmth forced the eggs to be laid, I don't know. Females that hold eggs for a long time will often lay infertile eggs, with the next spawn more viable. In this case, the hatch rate was around 40%, still giving a good number of fry. To reconfirm that temperature can be critical in the spawning of fish, I had a pair of Black Neons that had not laid eggs for about a week in another setup at 76 degrees. I then raised the temperature in the setup to 84 degrees and the pair spawned within 15 hours.

These experiences make me think more about varying the breeding conditions when not getting results in the normal way. That is likely a good idea for not only tetras, but other groups of fishes also, whether they are easy or difficult to breed!