



**Canadians Being Advised to Check Home Aquariums – Dangerous
invasive Mussels Discovered in Aquarium Plants**

At the beginning of this week, we had a big weak up call!
Zebra and quagga mussels are a serious threat to aquatic ecosystems, salmon
populations and infrastructure. There are no reports of these invasive mussels
yet in Yukon and our highest priority is to prevent their introduction!



“It is alarming to know that zebra mussels are hiding in aquarium plants, because these dangerous invasive species can easily take hold in Canadian waterways causing serious damage to native species and fisheries and can cause damage of more than \$43 million a year to municipal water supplies, recreational boating, and other infrastructure,” says Gail Wallin, Chair of the Canadian Council on Invasive Species. “Every aquarium owner must check their plants today to be sure they don’t have any invasive species, especially contaminated moss balls, in their aquariums.”

Zebra mussels are invasive freshwater mussels that have infested parts of Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba and have changed freshwater ecosystems, destroyed shorelines and impacted recreational and community infrastructure. To date, there has been no reported introduction of live zebra mussels into Yukon’s lakes or waterways, and the Yukon remains largely aquatic invasives species free. Some of the invasive species found in Yukon were originally sold as pets for aquariums. For example, goldfish released by pet owners in the Takhini hot springs or cherry shrimps released in the hot springs in Atlin, BC.

In Yukon, Yukon’s Fish and Wildlife Branch has been working with DFO to reach out to local aquarium stores followed by an inspection. The moss balls can also be purchased online and steps are undertaken to work with CFIA and CBSA on this issue. With spreading the word, we all hope we can reach out to aquarium owners and they take steps if necessary!

Anyone who finds zebra mussels in Yukon can call 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5721 to report their find.

YISC just developed an info card on zebra mussels and there is more info available on the website

[**Download the rack card**](#)

[**Go to YISC website**](#)

What is the Issue?

Zebra mussels have been detected in a variety of moss / algal ball products for aquariums or water gardens sold in western Canada, with moss balls positive for zebra mussels now

detected in BC and Alberta. These products, which are often sold as “Marimo Moss Balls”, are species of green algae typically purchased for aquariums to improve water quality. Moss balls can also be purchased online.

Here is what you as an aquarium owner can do:

Follow these three steps to treat and dispose of moss/algal balls.

Step 1: Treat the moss/algal balls:

- place into a plastic bag, seal and freeze (preferably in a deep freezer) for at least 24 hours
- or
- place in boiling water for at least 1 minute and then let cool

Step 2: Dispose of moss/algal balls:

- place it and any of its packaging in a sealed plastic bag and dispose in your household garbage

To prevent zebra mussels from getting into our water bodies, **do not dispose** of the moss/algal ball or any aquarium/water-garden contents (e.g., substrate, plants etc.):

- by flushing down the toilet
- by putting down drain
- in a compost

Step 3: Treat aquarium contents and water

After moss balls have been removed from an aquarium, do not dispose of untreated water down the drain or into any residential water system or waterway. Instead, take these additional steps:

For bowls and small tanks:

1. Remove fish or other living organisms from the aquarium and place them in another container, with water from a separate, uncontaminated water source.
2. Sterilize the remaining contaminated water from the bowl or small tank by adding 25ml of bleach per litre of water. Let the water sit for at least 15 minutes and then dispose of the sterilized water down a household drain.
3. Clean the aquarium and accessories using one of the following methods, ensuring that the method you choose is in accordance with manufacturers’ recommendations:
 - Boiling Method: Use water that is at least 60 degrees C/140 degrees F to flush and coat the tank and all accessory surfaces and allow to sit for a minimum of 1 minute
 - or the Disinfection Method: Make a disinfection solution using 25 ml of bleach per litre of water. Soak the aquarium, substrate, rocks, décor, and filter media in the bleach water solution for 15 minutes. Rinse off all items prior to setting up the aquarium. Dispose of the previously used filter media by placing it into a sealed plastic bag and disposing of it in your household trash. Use a dechlorinating product to neutralize any residual chlorine prior to placing back into the bowl or tank and reintroducing aquatic life.

For larger aquariums:

1. For larger aquariums and aquariums where complete disinfection is not possible, it is recommended that you monitor your tank for the next several months for any unusual or unexpected aquatic life.

2. Water from all water changes during this period should be treated by adding 25ml of bleach per litre of water that has been removed from the aquarium, letting it sit for at least 15 minutes prior to disposing the treated water down the drain.
3. Filter media being changed should also be disinfected by soaking it in a bleach solution (25ml of bleach per litre of water) for at least 15 minutes prior to being sealed in a plastic bag and disposed of in your household trash.

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