



Don't import glowing fish unless you have authorisation



Restrictions on importing glowing fish

Glowing or fluorescent fish such as GloFish® are genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and it is illegal to import them into Australia for personal or commercial use without an authorisation from the Regulator. To date no such authorisations have been issued. The latest information on commercial authorisations can be found on the [OGTR website](#).

The only authorisations have been for research use of certain kinds of genetically modified fish. These generally have specific organs or tissues that fluoresce and are used in biomedical research, for example, to understand how skeletons and organs develop.

Australia has strict quarantine rules and if you want to import any animals into Australia including pets and livestock you will require permission from Australia's quarantine authorities.

In addition, if you want to import any genetically modified plant or animal you need the appropriate authorisation from the Gene Technology Regulator.

If you are in possession of glowing fish, do not just destroy them – contact us and we will arrange permission for you to legally dispose of the fish.

Fines for illegal possession of GM fish range from \$105,000 to \$420,000. You could also be imprisoned for up to two years.

If you do want to apply for a licence to import GM fish or other animals or plants into Australia there are two processes – one for 'research' (which would most likely be classified as a Notifiable Low Risk Dealing - NLRD) and one for 'importing for sale' which would be classified as a Dealing Involving Intentional Release – DIR). Both processes are relatively complex due to the need to produce a scientific argument for why they are safe to bring into Australia. These processes are described in [Who needs to apply to import or use \(deal with\) a GMO?](#)

Which ornamental fish are genetically modified?

GM varieties of some common ornamental aquarium fish have been modified so that their scales, muscles or entire bodies express fluorescent proteins that enhance their colour. They are sometimes referred to as GloFish® or fluorescent fish, and come in a variety of different colours including red, green, blue, orange, purple and pink.

The species of GM ornamental fish currently available in some countries are:

- *Danio rerio*, commonly known as zebra fish or danios
- *Gymnocorymbus ternetzi* commonly known as white tetra or white skirt tetras
- *Puntius tetrazona* commonly known as tiger barb
- *Oryzias latipes*, commonly known as Japanese rice fish, Japanese killifish, Japanese medaka or tooth-carp.

There are incorrect claims that these colours are created by dyeing the fish or feeding them hormones. Any red, green, blue, orange or pink zebrafish, tetra, barb or Japanese rice fish should be considered as potentially GM.

Related factsheets

Genetically modified organisms in Australia

Genetically modified (GM) crops in Australia

How are genetically modified organisms (GMOs) regulated in Australia?

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