Podcast: Interview with a Consumer

Keeping Goldfish, Aberystwyth Wales, December 2014

Transcript

Helen: This is an interview with Lauren, a consumer of the aquarium trade. She’s had fish before, so I’m just interviewing her and seeing what she knows about the aquarium trade. First off, thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with me, Lauren.

Lauren: You’re welcome, that’s fine.

Helen: Good. You’ve had fish before, previously?

Lauren: Yes. I’ve had goldfish ever since I was very little, probably around 4 or 5 years old. Probably because my mum thought it would help me understand about how animals need food and water and how they need to be looked after, so it’s quite a good pet to start off with, being so young.

Helen: Ah, so quite like the responsibilities of looking after an individual.

Lauren: Yes.

Helen: So your mum introduced you to fish for educational purposes?

Lauren: Yes, I think so. Just because I really liked animals and also we lived in a flat, so it was quite difficult to have animals in the house. A fish was probably the easiest kind of animal that we were able to have as pets.

Helen: Ok.

Lauren: Yes. I think it did help me because now I’m doing Animal Science, so it was very useful.

Helen: That’s good, it introduced you. And how long did the goldfish live for?

Lauren: The first lot of goldfish I had, I actually remember, that they lasted quite a long time. We actually had about 4 in there and we actually ended up overfeeding them and they shortly died.

Helen: Ah, they overfed?
Lauren: Yes. I think I remember that we might’ve overfed them and they got really quite big, they didn’t last very long. But recently, we’ve been to the fair and been a bit older; we’ve had other types of pets since then. But they’re still quite difficult animals to look after, so I think that was quite a big lesson not to feed them too much. Since then, the ones that we’ve previously had were from the Fair and we didn’t have a filter or anything for them until our Auntie had given us her fish tank for them. So we were probably quite ignorant, really, of what the needs were for the fish because I’ve recently – a couple of weeks ago – been to purchase a fish from Pets At Home and they refused to sell you a fish unless you buy a filter, for the health and welfare for the fish. It’s quite shocking that you’re able to have a fish so easily; you can get access to them. Perhaps it’s not really for the best welfare of the fish itself, because people who have no knowledge of how to keep fish can get hold of them and it proves that I was a young child and I didn’t know how to feed the fish. There’s no control over who can have fish or who’s in charge of the welfare, there’s no regulations really controlling that.

Helen: Yeah. Do you think it was quite difficult to access information about the proper care of fish and how you need a filter for them, and how much to feed them. Do you think it’s quite difficult to find information?

Lauren: This day and age it’s probably not that hard because Google is always around to use. But I think as a young child, it was quite difficult for me and at the time my parents didn’t realise that fish needed to have filters in their tanks. Also, on the TV, in cartoons and things like that, fish are just in fish bowls, so everyone assumes that there’s no publicity on actually how to keep fish. But I think nowadays there’s more known and there must be more regulations in companies like Pets At Home, that they’ve put in place so things like this doesn’t happen. Yeah, I think it is easier now to find out how to look after your animals, but I think it’s only if you actually do care about the welfare of your fish, because quite of lot of people just think it’s quite an insignificant animal because it’s small and it’s not the same as having a cat or a dog, I don’t think in that respect.

Helen: Yeah. Do you think you would get fish again in the future, because you’re at uni (university) at the moment?
Lauren: Yeah, I definitely think that fish are quite an easy animal to look after, as long as you’ve got enough time to clean the tank out every other week, and especially if you have got a filter; it makes it so much easier because the water is being cleaned itself. Obviously, now I’m a bit older I know how much to feed fish and what sort of enrichments they need in their tanks, and what sort of things you can buy to add to the water to clean the water for the fish and to make sure it’s the right environment for it. I think that yes I would get a fish. Even though I am at university, I wouldn’t have any other animal in the house, but a fish I think is quite an easy animal to have as long as you know what to do to look after it and make sure that its environment is the best that it can be for its welfare. I think they’re not too taxing an animal to have whilst you’re at university. Obviously, then you’ve got to think about when you go away on holiday and things like that. If you’ve got people you can leave the fish with, it’s not too bad, but it’s still an animal and you have to be committed to that animal, so it’s quite a tricky one really.

Helen: Yeah. What advice would you give to anyone thinking about getting a goldfish, based on your experience?

Lauren: I definitely think don’t get them as an animal to test your child to see if they’ve got enough independence to look after an animal. Because you should really be monitoring the welfare of the fish; as an adult, so it’s definitely not a good idea. That goes for rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters and things as well. I think it has to be down to the adult to take care and have the responsibility to find out what the requirement for the animal is. So don’t just get fish, even though you may think that it’s an insignificant animal. No animal is, they all have welfare things that you should take into consideration and they’re still a living being. Definitely don’t get animals to teach your children lessons, although, make sure that you do know about all the environmental things that the animal needs in its tank to live healthily and happily. Definitely get a filter, because that’s the main point that the man at the shop had told me and be prepared to spend enough money on a big enough tank, because I think people think they can fit it in a small tank. But actually, fish in the wild would have the whole sea or the whole river, or the pond or wherever to swim and actually its nice for the fish to have enough space to swim around in. Just be prepared to pay that little bit more for a suitable tank, if you’re thinking about keeping a fish for a long time, because obviously they last a couple of years – 3 years – so it is quite a long commitment, really. It’s nearly as long as my degree. So just be prepared to actually spend money on the animal, even though it may just be a small animal, it still has feelings and needs, so it’s still a living being.

Helen: Ok. Well thank you very much for this interview. Thank you so much, Lauren.

Lauren: Thank you, that’s ok. Thanks.