

# Protecting Corals from Predatory Flatworms



## INTRODUCTION

Parasitic marine flatworms are a common problem in reef aquariums. The flatworms enter the aquarium on live rock and coral specimens. Once in the aquarium, flatworms multiply, over-run the aquarium, and begin damaging coral tissue. Brown flatworms usually hide in live rock, but are visible without a microscope. Acropora and Pocillopora flatworms, however, are difficult to see. These worms prefer the tissue of short-polyp species, such as Staghorn types. Flatworms can devastate a reef aquarium if not quickly brought under control.

## METHODS

Flatworms were collected from a reef aquarium and placed in beakers containing saltwater.

- Two 600 ml beakers were filled with 400 ml of aquarium water
- 45 flatworms were placed in each beaker
- One beaker was an untreated control.
- One beaker was treated with 4 ml of MELAFIX MARINE, as per label directions when used as a coral dip.
- After three minutes, the flatworms were examined and photographed.

## AIM

To demonstrate the effectiveness of MELAFIX MARINE for the control of parasitic flatworms.

## RESULT

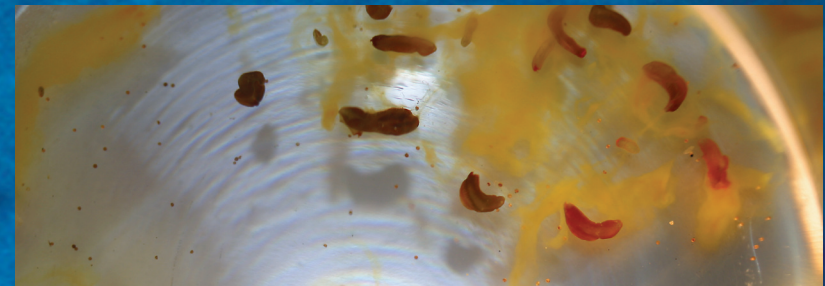
- Upon being treated with MELAFIX MARINE, the flatworms convulsed and began moving abnormally.
- Treated flatworms were dead in three to five minutes after treatment.
- Internal body fluids (protoplasm) of the MELAFIX treated worms leaked out of the worms and into the water.
- After 24 hours, all of the untreated worms remained alive and moved around the beaker.

## DISCUSSION

Marine flatworms are considered nuisance species, and can cause severe damage to corals kept in reef aquariums. The best method of control is to prevent the introduction of flatworms into the aquarium. Live rock and corals should be treated for flatworms before introduction into the aquarium. MELAFIX MARINE, used as a short term dip or bath treatment, will kill parasitic flatworms in live rock and on coral and help prevent flatworm infestation in a reef aquarium.



**Photograph 1: Untreated flatworms in a beaker containing saltwater.**



**Photograph 2: Dead flatworms after treatment with MELAFIX MARINE. Note leaking protoplasm.**

© 2008 Mars Fishcare Aquatic Research Laboratories, Mars Fishcare North America, Inc.