

Seahorse Super Dads

Among all the dads in the ocean, there is one that stands out. The male seahorse is one of the only animals that carries and delivers its babies. That makes it the super dad of the sea!

Seahorses stay with one partner for their whole lives. During the mating process, the partners do a dance. They circle each other, change color, and even link tails. They perform this dance every day until the female is ready to lay eggs and the male is ready to receive them.

When the female seahorse lays the eggs, she deposits them, unfertilized, into the male's pouch. He fertilizes the eggs with his sperm. The eggs hatch inside the pouch, where the babies will grow for 10-25 days.

Depending on the species of seahorse, the male will carry between 5 and 2,000 babies. He will supply them with the food and oxygen that they need to grow. He has to regulate the salt levels in his pouch to match the ocean around him. It takes a lot of energy to create the perfect environment for the developing babies.

When the babies are ready to be born, the male seahorse has muscle contractions that push them out into the ocean. The young, called fry, are now on their own. The seahorse parents no longer provide food or protection for their young.



The fry are still small and vulnerable. They can be eaten by predators or swept away in currents. The currents might carry them to places where the temperatures are too hot or too cold, or to areas where there is not enough food. Only one in 1,000 fry will survive to adulthood.

Abandoning the fry so quickly after birth might seem cruel. But seahorses have a better chance of survival than most fish. Other fish abandon their young as soon as the eggs are laid. By carrying its babies in its pouch, the father seahorse gives them a good head start on life. Thank you, super dad of the sea!



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Which seahorse lays the eggs?
 - a. The male
 - b. The female
 - c. Both the male and the female
 - d. They don't lay eggs

2. What does the male seahorse do for its babies?
 - a. Provides food
 - b. Provides oxygen
 - c. Regulates salt levels
 - d. All of the above

3. Why do seahorses abandon their babies after birth?
 - a. The babies are self-sufficient
 - b. That's what fish do
 - c. They are cruel
 - d. The babies are not in any danger

4. Which of the following is most likely the meaning of the word "vulnerable"?
 - a. Capable of being hurt
 - b. Not powerful enough
 - c. Capable of fighting off predators
 - d. In need of food

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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