

## Did you know .....

### **Name**

The Latin name for seahorse is Hippocampus which means "Horse Caterpillar"

### **What is a Seahorse**

Seahorses are fish. They live in water, breath through gills and have a swim bladder. However they do not have caudal fins and have a long snake-like tail. They also have a neck and a snout that points down.

### **Eyesight**

Seahorses have excellent eyesight and their eyes are able to work independently on either side of their head. This means they can look forwards and backwards at the same time! This is particularly useful as they hunt for food by sight.

### **Snout**

Seahorses have long thin snouts enabling them to probe into nooks and crannies for food. When they find food they suck it up through their snouts like a vacuum cleaner. Their snouts can expand if their prey is larger than the snout. They are not able to chew and have to disintegrate the food as they eat it.

### **Diet**

Seahorses eat small crustacea such as Mysis Shrimp. An adult eats 30-50 times a day. Seahorse fry (baby seahorses) eat a staggering 3000 pieces of food per day.



## **Baby Seahorses**

Baby seahorses are known as fry and when they are born they are totally on their own. They spend the first two to three weeks of their lives drifting along in the plankton layer of the ocean. Less than one in a thousand will survive long enough to become an adult due to predators.

## **Tail**

Seahorses have a prehensile tail. This allows them to grip onto eel grass and other weeds and prevents them from being washed away by strong currents and waves.

## **Color**

Seahorses can change color very quickly and match any surroundings in which it finds itself. They have even been known to turn bright red to match floating debris. Both males and females also change color during their courtship display.

## **Body**

Unlike most other fish, seahorses have an exo-skeleton. Their bodies are made up of hard, external, bony plates that are fused together with a fleshy covering. They do not have scales.

## **Movement**

Seahorses are poor swimmers. They rely on their dorsal fin beating at 30-70 times per second to propel it along. Pectoral fins either side of the head help with stability and steering.

## **Appendages**

Seahorses are able to grow fleshy appendages called cirri on their bodies. This gives them a weed like appearance and helps with camouflage.

## **Species**

There are between 30 and 40 species of seahorses worldwide, and possibly as many sub-species. It is often difficult for scientists to identify seahorses because individuals of the same species can vary greatly in appearance. New species continue to be found.

## **Habitat**

Seahorses live in shallow weedy areas especially eel grass beds. In winter they move into deeper waters to escape the rough weather.