

Snowball Shrimp - care guide

Neocaridina davidi

An easy, prolific white *Neocaridina* named for its opaque white eggs, which look like tiny snowballs. As hardy as a Cherry Shrimp, and a good choice for a first colony.

At a glance

Difficulty: Beginner

Adult size: 2-3cm

Lifespan: 1-2 years

Water parameters

Temperature: 20-24°C

pH: 6.8-7.8

GH: 6-12

KH: 2-8

TDS: 150-250

These are the ranges to aim for, not the extremes they can survive. Shrimp are far more sensitive to sudden change than to imperfect conditions - stability matters more than hitting an exact number.

Keeping them

Snowball Shrimp are a white **Neocaridina** line, and every bit as straightforward as Red Cherry Shrimp. They take the same water, the same feeding and the same tank, and they breed just as readily.

The name comes from the eggs rather than the adults: Snowball eggs are bright opaque white, unmistakable under a berried female's tail, and genuinely one of the more charming sights in the hobby. Adults are a translucent milky white - less solidly opaque than a high-grade Cherry, and they show their internal organs more visibly, which is normal rather than a sign of ill health.

They show up beautifully against dark substrate and planting, and rather poorly against pale sand. Worth considering before scaping.

As with any *Neocaridina* colour line: keep them apart from other *Neocaridina*. Snowballs crossed with Cherries or Blue Dreams produce wild-type brown offspring within a couple of generations.

Water

Identical to Red Cherry Shrimp - see that guide for the full explanation.

Summary: GH 6-12 (a moulting requirement), keep some KH for pH stability, ordinary treated tap water is fine in most UK hard-water areas, remineralise in soft-water regions. No copper, ever. Drip acclimatise over 2-3 hours.

Snowballs tolerate slightly harder and more alkaline water than most *Neocaridina* lines comfortably - the upper end of the pH range here is genuinely fine rather than merely survivable.

Feeding

As Red Cherry Shrimp: biofilm grazers, lightly supplemented two or three times a week with shrimp food, blanched courgette, spinach or nettle.

Feed sparingly. The most common beginner mistake with any *Neocaridina* is feeding as though they were fish.

One small note specific to white lines: a white shrimp shows gut contents clearly, so what they have been eating is visible as a coloured line down the back. This is a genuinely useful health readout - a full, evenly

coloured gut is a well-fed shrimp, and an empty or patchy one in an otherwise active shrimp is worth watching.

Telling males from females

The easiest Neocaridina to sex, and it's the white body that does it.

A Snowball's translucent milky colouring means the saddle shows through more clearly than on any red or blue line - a pale yellowish-green patch behind the head, obvious against the white. Where a Blue Dream keeper is squinting with a torch, a Snowball keeper can usually just look.

Then the standard markers: adult females are larger with a deep curved abdomen, males slimmer and straight-bellied.

And the eggs are the giveaway the species is named for. Berried Snowball females carry bright opaque white eggs - the "snowballs" - which are unmistakable and, unlike a saddle, visible from across a room.

Same rule as any dwarf shrimp: don't try to sex juveniles under about three months, and buy ten or more rather than attempting pairs.

Breeding

Prolific and entirely unassisted, exactly as Red Cherry Shrimp. Berried females carry roughly 20-30 of the distinctive white eggs, hatching in three to four weeks into fully independent miniature adults. No larval stage, no special rearing.

Snowballs hold their colour more reliably across generations than blue lines do - white is a more stable trait in *Neocaridina* than blue, and colonies need less aggressive culling to stay looking good. Some regression happens; occasional culling of the most translucent individuals keeps a line crisp.

Provide moss and leaf litter for shrimplet cover, and expect a starter group of ten to become a visible colony within a few months.

Tank mates

Neocaridina are prey animals and behave like it. They do best either in a species-only tank or with fish too small and too peaceful to treat them as food.

Safe: otocinclus, pygmy corydoras, ember tetras, chili rasboras, nerite and ramshorn snails, and other dwarf shrimp of the same genus.

Risky: most tetras and rasboras above about 4cm will take shrimplets even if they leave adults alone. You will keep a colony, but you will rarely see it grow.

Not safe: angelfish, gouramis, cichlids of any size, bettas (individual temperament varies, but the odds are poor), loaches, and anything described as a "community fish" that reaches 8cm or more.

A heavily planted tank changes these odds considerably - moss, floating plants and leaf litter give shrimplets somewhere to be invisible for the two weeks that matter most.

Common problems

The standard Neocaridina issues apply unchanged - see the Red Cherry Shrimp guide for full detail on moulting failures, parameter-swing losses, copper sensitivity and overfeeding.

Specific to Snowballs:

Hard to see against pale substrate. Not a health issue, but a real practical annoyance - a colony can look far smaller than it is over light sand, and it makes spotting problems harder.

Apparent translucency mistaken for illness. A healthy Snowball is milky, not solid white, and internal organs being faintly visible is normal. Genuine bacterial infection looks different: a dense, chalky, opaque white patch, usually localised, in a shrimp that has stopped moving normally.

Colour dulling with age or stress. Usually temporary and environmental. Check for recent parameter changes

before assuming genetics.

Grades & buying

Snowballs are graded far less formally than red or blue lines - mostly they are simply sold as Snowball Shrimp, with price varying on size and colony quality rather than a named grade ladder.

Where grading language is used, it refers to opacity and evenness of the white. The best animals are consistently milky along the whole body with minimal transparent patching; lower-quality stock looks patchy or nearly clear.

They are sometimes confused with White Pearl Shrimp, which is essentially the same animal under another trade name, and occasionally with Golden Back lines, which carry a distinct yellow-white dorsal stripe and are a different selection.

Because white shows condition so clearly, photographs are unusually informative for this species - a seller's photo of milky, evenly coloured, active animals is a reliable signal, and washed-out or hidden photography is worth asking about.

In the wild

Neocaridina palmata shares the broad eastern-Asian range of its close relatives - southern China and the surrounding region - in the same slow, hard-water streams and ponds among vegetation and leaf litter.

The taxonomy here is less settled than the hobby names suggest. Snowballs are usually listed as **N. palmata**, sometimes as **N. cf. zhangjiajiensis**, and some sources treat them as another **N. davidi** line. They behave identically to other *Neocaridina* in every respect that matters for keeping them, and they interbreed with them, which tells you most of what you need to know regardless of what the label says.

As with all *Neocaridina*: hard water, temperate range, room temperature rather than tropical warmth. The wild animal is translucent and drab; the white is bred.

How it reached the hobby

Snowballs are generally credited to the German breeder Ulf Gottschalk, who is said to have developed the line in the early-to-mid 2000s. That attribution is repeated consistently across the hobby, which is more than can be said for most *Neocaridina* lines, though it still rests on hobby record rather than published work.

The name comes from the eggs rather than the adults - bright, opaque white, and genuinely distinctive under a berried female. It's a rare case of a hobby name describing something real and specific rather than being marketing.

White is a more stable trait in **Neocaridina** than blue, which is why Snowball colonies hold their appearance across generations with less aggressive culling than a Blue Dream line needs. Still not stable enough to ignore entirely: occasional culling of the most translucent individuals keeps a colony crisp.

They're also sold as White Pearl Shrimp, which is the same animal under a different trade name - and occasionally confused with Golden Back lines, which carry a distinct yellow-white dorsal stripe and are a separate selection.

Care advice is general guidance - if something in your tank disagrees with this guide, trust your own water tests. Read the latest version at shrimpbay.shop/species/snowball-shrimp