

A GUIDE TO STOCKING OF RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

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The following acts as a general guide to the introduction of fish stocks into recreational fisheries. They are not exhaustive and you should contact your local Environment Agency Fisheries team for further advice prior to proceeding. With any introduction of fish into a fishery, there are risks but careful and thorough planning will minimise such risks, so ensure to take time over the whole process.

It is far too late to decide it was the wrong idea when the new fish have been introduced!

Before stocking consider:

- Be really clear about the reasons for stocking – are they totally valid?
- Is there actually any need to stock or will other measures improve the fishery?
- Can natural recruitment be encouraged?
- Can the fishery sustain a higher biomass than it already has?
- Are the existing fish growing?
- What are the suitable / desired species of fish?
- How many to stock?
- The size of fish and potential predators
- Time of year?
- What impact upon angling will the stocking have?

Sources of fish

Realistically there are two avenues available to a fishery manager when it comes to sourcing fish for the lake: either farmed fish or those sourced from a fish dealer that have been netted from other fisheries or natural waters. Both have their pros and cons but the following questions may be asked and, in any case, a good supplier will happily answer all your questions.

- Ask for the farm's CEFAS registration number
- Do the fish have a current health check?
- Ask for details of previous customers you may contact to seek views of the supplier and the fish
- What is the history of the fish?
- Are they imported? Legally, a supplier does not have to tell you this unless asked!
- What age are they?
- What is the maximum and minimum size range of the fish you will receive?
- Are the fish the right species and not hybrids or colour variants?
- Have the fish undergone any other additional health investigations such as KHV / SVC testing.
- Is it claimed that the fish have been genetically modified or immunised against certain diseases? These are very much a personal choice of yours as the purchaser.
- How will the fish be transported?
- Confirm the cost of the fish, delivery charges and payment requirements.
- Either complete the Section 30 / 1 Water 1 application paperwork yourself or insist on copies of ALL relevant EA consents and health checks to do with the fish and their introduction. Ensure these consents have been received before the fish arrive at your fishery. This is a legal requirement and any good supplier will insist this is completed, as should you.
- Get written confirmation of your order from the supplier listing all the important details above.

Always talk to other clubs or fisheries for their experiences and recommendations as to potential fish suppliers. Shop around and contact various suppliers – very cheap fish are often that because they are of lesser quality or all may not be as it seems with them.

Receiving the fish

Always remember that YOU are the customer- only accept what you are happy with and ordered. Do not be bullied or intimidated into accepting fish that you feel do not match what was ordered or described to you. If in doubt, turn them away!

Consider the following when receiving fish from a supplier:

- Take control from the outset – YOU are the customer.
- Always ensure the fish are delivered during daylight hours and in plenty of time to allow the unloading of the fish to be carried out at your leisure.
- Always be present in person when the fish are introduced
- Ensure ALL EA paperwork is checked and covers all the fish to be introduced before unloading any fish. You may contact your local EA fisheries office to confirm if consents, applied for by the supplier, have been approved.
- Encourage the EA to be present at the introduction – you have nothing to hide and neither will a good supplier.
- Check the fish are exactly what you ordered (e.g. species, size, weight, quality, number, health status / condition etc) and if in any doubt do not proceed with the introduction.
- Ensure all prices / costs are agreed before any fish are unloaded.
- Check the temperature difference between the transport tank and receiving water. Large temperature shocks may kill the fish.
- Insist that the fish are weighed or counted off the vehicle in front of you and that you understand the method and units of weighing. Never accept a weight or number count that has not been carried out in front of you.
- Assign a scribe to record weights / numbers, agree these with the supplier and are recorded by both parties.
- Once all the fish are unloaded, agree the final invoice amount with the supplier.
- Take photographs of the fish and the introductions for your records as you see fit. Ensure this is done with the minimum amount of delay or stress to the fish.