

Feeding Information Courtesy of Blue Water Koi

www.bluewaterkoi.com

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When I was in Japan last spring the Japanese breeders were giving me a little talk and I have been cautioned by them that Koi Hobbyists make a big mistake this time of year by feeding to early and feeding too much.

They reminded me not to feed the Koi until the water temperature is established above 50 degrees and no chance of it dropping below that mark. They say it is better to under feed our Koi than to over feed them. Koi in the cooler climates have not eaten for six months and maybe longer, and they need to be treated with great care at this delicate time in their cycle.

Spring time is the time our Koi show signs of hole disease. We are always quick to blame this on the fluctuating temperatures and while this is hard on the Koi, we tend to complicate their ability to cope with this stressful situation by overfeeding. I have been guilty of this thinking that feeding them will help give them energy to fight this problem but it only contributes to adding to the problem. You see the Koi do not have a stomach and when they eat the food we give them, the cooler temperatures don't allow them to process the food they eat and it has to pass through their long intestine. They can't do this efficiently and before they can pass it, it begins to rot and causes many different problems such as hole disease, septicemia, or dropsy, along with any other complication. The Koi are not really up and going yet so their resistance to parasites and these other complications are at a very minimum.

When you start feeding in the spring, start them off with uncooked Quaker oats or presoaked cheerios. I think maybe even a good quality wheat germ Koi food would be good too, if you soak it until it is soft this way it would be easily digested by the Koi. Paste food is good to feed at this time of year but a lot of people don't like it because it is too messy but it is very digestible and nutritious for the Koi. You can mix it with orange juice instead of water and add vitamins to it too. I feel the soaked wheat germ or the paste food is far superior to the cheerios and oatmeal. Please check any food you feed at this time of year and make sure it is not too high in protein as protein is harder to digest. Also make sure that the food is fresh and free of mold or spoilage. If your food has been stored over the winter and you see any moisture in the container throw the food out because it will be spoiled and one Koi is far more expensive than one bag of food.

When you start to feed your Koi feed them sparingly. All they need is just a couple pieces each depending on their size. If we go on a fast we don't go out and start eating a big steak dinner we are told to drink broth or soup to get our system going again and that is after going just a day or two without eating and our Koi have gone six months. Use the same caution with your Koi.

At first with the water temperature between 50 and 60 degrees you should only feed once a week. After the water temperature gets to 60 degrees you can feed 2 to 3 times a week. I know this doesn't sound like much food but it is going to reduce the amount of illness you have with your Koi in the spring. Once you begin feeding you need to watch the Koi very close if you see them with scales beginning to raise or turning red stop feeding immediately and watch them if they don't go down you may need to treat

them with an anti bacterial medication, or move the affected Koi to a heated hospital tank. When the water gets to 65 degrees you can feed them once a day and just continue to watch them for any tail end effects of the cold water and early feeding. Sometimes it takes a month or more for problems too show up.

I have been guilty of overfeeding in my greenhouse and when I tried this routine it has worked so good that usually at this time of year I have 10 to 20 Koi in my hospital tank, and it absolutely empty this year.

Below is a chart of feeding by temperature range.
The water temperatures are in Fahrenheit

Temp.	Feeding
70-80	Every day. As much as they can in in about 10 minutes. Feed several times a day. Be careful to not pollute the water with too much food.
65 to 69	Every day, twice a day with a staple food.
61 to 64	Every day, once a day. Morning to late or early afternoon feedings are best.
55 to 60	Every 3 to 4 days of Wheat Germ
50 to 54	Feed once a week with presoaked pellet Wheat Germ
Below 50	Do not feed!