

Bagging and transporting live fish for health checks

Transporting fish

If you need to send or deliver fish to a consultant for a health check to support a consent to introduce fish, it is very important that the fish arrive alive and in good condition. The best way to transport fish is in purpose built tanks, but if done properly thick plastic bags can provide a safe, cheap and convenient substitute.



If the fish are not alive on arrival they cannot be used for a health check. The fish should always be moved in water from the lake, pond or tank they live in. Tap water should never be used.

How to transport fish in bags

What bags are suitable for transportation?

The bags for transporting your fish must be made of thick plastic and be leak proof (at least 500 gauge, available from specialist suppliers). Do not use black bin bags as they are not strong enough.

How much water is needed for the fish in transit?

Only fill the bag with water until it is approximately 20-30 per cent full. Overfilling will reduce the amount of oxygen in the bag, which may lead to problems. You must never add anaesthetics to the bag as this may kill the fish.

How many fish per bag?

The number of fish transported in each bag depends on the species, size of the fish, temperature and length of the journey. Ideally, the volume of fish should not exceed 10 per cent of the volume of water. Trout, salmon, perch and pike all have a greater oxygen requirement than cyprinids (like carp, roach or tench), so they need to be bagged in lower numbers. In warm conditions, reduce the number of fish further. This is because fish need more oxygen at higher temperatures and the water can't hold as much oxygen. Use common sense. If the bag looks overcrowded, it probably is.

Place the fish in the bags at the last available moment before transport. The less time the fish are bagged, the better.

How to inflate and seal the bags?

After adding the fish, inflate the bags to their maximum capacity. Normally, inflating the bags with air is adequate, but if you have oxygen available, this is even better. Always keep the ratio of air to water as high as possible. You may decide to use an air line and a battery operated air pump to help maintain oxygen levels. These are available from good aquatic stores.



Ensure the bags are sealed so that they are airtight. You can do this by twisting the neck of the bag until tight, then fold it over and secure it with strong elastic bands, tape or commercial bag ties. For extra strength, use a second plastic bag and secure the top again. If possible, you should also put the bags into an insulated polystyrene box or a strong cardboard box, preferably lined with polystyrene. This keeps the water cool, and is particularly important during warmer weather as it helps keep oxygen levels high. Placing ice or freezer blocks between the bags and the box (ideally around the top or the sides of the bag to avoid over-chilling of the water) will also help. Never put ice blocks in the bag. Remember to smooth out creases in the bag and tape the corners, preventing the fish from getting trapped.

Are you sending your fish by courier?

If you are sending fish by a courier, you must label all of the boxes clearly with the fish species, date of packaging and where they are from. Seal the box and label with "Live Fish" and "This Way Up". Any courier you use must be registered to transport fish under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 2006 (for more information see the Defra website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk>). It is your responsibility to check that this is in place. All fish movements must comply with these regulations. More information on transporting fish and the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 2006 can be found on the eFishBusiness website (<http://www.efishbusiness.co.uk>).

For more information on transporting fish safely please contact:

Your local fisheries officer: Available from the National Customer Contact Centre
Tel: 08708 506 506; **Website:** <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

This fact sheet has been produced by:

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