

Fish size rules for Section 30 health checks

Principles

Before we can consent to introducing fish into a mandatory site (where water can flow from one body of water to another, or is in the floodplain) under Section 30, a sample of those fish must pass a mandatory health check. The fish examined for these health checks must be representative of the fish to be stocked. This means that there are rules for the number, size and species of fish that must be examined during a health check.

Why we have the rules

The rules are based on evidence that:

- a certain number of fish must be examined to give an acceptable chance of detecting an infection of Category 2 or novel parasites;
- some parasites are specific to the species of fish they infect;
- some parasites are specific to the size of fish they prefer to infect.

These rules have been designed to be as simple as possible and take into account the impact of the loss of the fish, in terms of both number and value.

Rules for health checks

Overall sample size

For a mandatory health check, we require the following:

- a minimum of 30 fish must be examined;
- for each species of fish to be moved, a minimum of 10 fish must be examined;
- for each size category of fish to be moved, a minimum of five fish must be examined, providing they are supported by fish from the adjacent size categories.

Size categories

The size categories of pike and other fish species are given in the tables on the next page:

- pike have a small and a large size category;
- Group 1 fish species (carp, tench, barbel and common bream) are divided into small, medium and large size categories;
- Group 2 fish species (such as roach, rudd, trout, salmon and all other species) are divided into small and medium size categories;
- for all species (excluding pike), fry (fish less than 5 cm) are regarded as a separate size category.

Size categories for pike (*Esox lucius*)

Species	Fish size categories (fork length)			
	Small		Large	
	cm	inches	cm	inches
Pike	≤46	≤18	≥46	≥18

Size categories for other fish species

Species	Fish size categories (fork length)							
	Fry		Small		Medium		Large	
	cm	inches	cm	inches	cm	inches	cm	inches
Group 1 ¹	≤5	≤2	5-15	2-6	15-25	6-10	≥25	≥10
Group 2 ²	≤5	≤2	5-15	2-6	≥15	≥6	-	-
Special cases	Please telephone the NFFT, Brampton on 01480 483802.							

¹Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), tench (*Tinca tinca*), barbel (*Barbus barbus*) and common bream (*Abramis brama*).

²Roach, rudd, silver bream, trout, salmon, crucian carp, gudgeon, etc.

Size category rules

The sizes of fish examined within a species, must meet the following rules:

1. If one size category of fish is to be moved, then:

- 10 fish from this size category must be examined;
- or a minimum of five fish from this size category must be examined, providing fish from the adjacent size categories are also examined, to make the species number up to 10.

Examples:

- For a sample containing seven small roach, three medium roach and 20 small rudd, the health check will pass for small rudd and small roach only. This is because at least five small roach have been examined, supported by roach from the adjacent size class.
- For a sample containing six medium carp, two small carp, one large carp and 21 small roach, the health check will only pass for small roach. This is because 10 carp have not been examined, so the species cannot pass a mandatory health check.

2. If more than one size category of fish is to be moved, then:

- five fish from each size category must be examined, providing they are from adjacent size categories;
- but if there aren't any fish in the adjacent size category, then 10 fish from each of the size categories must be examined.

Examples:

- If you need small, medium and large carp for a health check, five small carp, five medium carp and five large carp must be examined. The remaining 15 fish can be made up of other species and sizes.
- If you need small and large common bream for a health check, then 10 small common bream and 10 large common bream must be examined, if there aren't any common bream in the medium size category. The remaining 10 fish can be made up of other species and sizes.
- If you need small and large pike for a health check, then five small pike and five large pike must be examined. This is because there is no medium size class for pike. The remaining 20 fish can be made up of other species and sizes.

Once the minimum number of fish for each species and each size category is met, the remaining fish (to make up the minimum sample size of 30) can be any species and any size (greater than fry), providing they are from the same water.

Ornamental and colour variants

Ornamental colour variants of fish species (for example ghost carp, koi carp, golden rudd and golden tench) are treated as separate "species". Therefore, these must be reported separately under the variant name (for example golden rudd must be listed separately from rudd).

Though ornamental variants will not be consented for stocking into mandatory waters, you can use them to make up the total number of fish required for a health check (for example, to make the sample up to 30 fish). You can't use them to make up the minimum 10 fish required for each species (or 15 fish if three size categories are to be introduced).

Example:

For a sample of small common carp and small ghost carp, a minimum of 10 small common carp must be examined, with the remaining 20 fish made up of small common or ghost carp. If you only get nine small common carp and 21 small ghost carp examined, the small common carp will fail the health check due to insufficient numbers.

Hybrids

Hybrids of native species are not treated as separate species but you can't use them to make up the 10 fish required for parent species. If hybrids are stated on an application and you need them for a health check, then 10 fish of each parent species is required. You can use hybrids to make the sample up to 30 fish.

Example:

For a sample of small roach, small rudd and small roach/rudd hybrids, at least 10 small roach and 10 small rudd must be examined, for the hybrids and parent species to pass. The remaining 10 fish can be made up of any other fish species and sizes. If you only get nine small roach, 10 small rudd and 11 small roach/rudd hybrids examined, the health check will only apply to small rudd.