

IFM Position Paper.

Koi Herpesvirus (KHV) is a disease that affects common carp and ornamental carp varieties such as Koi. The disease only causes a problem within fisheries in periods of elevated water temperatures, so late spring and summer are the high risk periods for associated fish mortalities, which can vary between 20-100 % of the stock of the susceptible species.

Protecting Fisheries against KHV in similar with other fish disease should be based around sound bio-security measures. The first line of defence is ensuring that you do not get the disease into the fishery in the first place. To do this the fishery manager needs to access the risk of this.

The risk from planned fish introductions.

The risk of unplanned / unauthorised fish introductions

The risk of the disease being introduced by a wild animal, on anglers, tackle etc.

Bio-security is a risk based exercise. The fishery manager looks at the planned action and assesses the risk to the fishery from KHV.

Stocking is by far the greatest risk and for that reason it is critical to minimise this risk to acceptable levels. The best way to do this is not to stock at all.

If stocking has to be done then it is important to obtain Section 30 consent for the introduction from the Environment Agency. Fish should only be purchased from a reputable dealer, avoid dual sourcing the introduction.

The IFM would recommend that fishery managers do not accept vaccinated fish as a method of reducing risk. Until such time as tests are fully developed to distinguish between carriers (previously infected fish) and vaccinated fish and the question of latency has been satisfactorily answered the precautionary principal should be adopted with regard to vaccinated fish and not stocked at all into fisheries.

If a fishery is unfortunate despite its best efforts and becomes infected with KHV in common with many other fish diseases it is very likely to respond to good fishery management practice, which is all about swinging the dynamic equilibrium that exists between fish, their pathogens and the environment back in favour of the fish. Improvement in habitat, water quality and other environmental parameters will achieve this. The IFM's booklet "Codes of Practice for the Management of Intensively Stocked Stillwater Fisheries" details this type of management.

It is incumbent on a fishery who has KHV to ensure that their bio-security strategy manages the disease and does not allow onward transmission to other fisheries.

The Environment Agency has published a document “Life after KHV” that gives a useful overview of managing the disease.

The IFM will have a Code of Practice for Bio-security for Freshwater Fisheries available in the new year. Check out the website (www.IfM.org.uk).