

Fish Welfare Group - Press News

For immediate release – 21st May 2007

Strong Support For KHV Statutory Controls

The disease caused by Koi Herpesvirus (KHV) became notifiable in England and Wales on April 6th 2007. This regulation places a statutory obligation on anyone suspecting the presence of KHV in fish stocks to report it to the authorities.

However, to limit the damage caused by the disease, much more is needed by all involved in managing recreational fisheries, supplying those fisheries and importing, selling and keeping ornamental fish. Control measures could have been introduced directly by Government, but following a detailed consultation process with industry bodies, an innovative approach of joint industry/Government co-operation has been agreed.

Organisations participating in the Fish Welfare Group have welcomed the opportunity to work with DEFRA and the industry sector generally to formulate the strategy to control KHV. Many representatives, from a wide variety of organisations, have worked together with government officials to develop this joint approach.

Codes of best practice have been developed to provide a variety of interlinked actions to protect the UK's wild and ornamental fish stocks. They will help prevent outbreaks of KHV and other novel diseases that will threaten fish welfare in future. These codes are designed to improve general bio-security in the ornamental, fish farming, fish supply and fishery management sectors. Use of these codes will ensure rising standards of competency in fishery management, fish transport, fish purchase and husbandry. This initiative is founded on bio-security principles and correctly places the emphasis of fighting diseases on those who purchase and care for fish in situations as diverse as natural fisheries or ornamental fish retailing outlets.

These codes have been recognised and supported by DEFRA, Cefas, the Environment Agency and other governmental bodies, and they should be used to help make informed choices on buying and moving fish by fish-related businesses. Commercial organisations, the voluntary sector and individuals following these codes will be helped not only to fight KHV but also to meet legal obligations under new regulations concerning animal transport and animal welfare.

It is now imperative that each individual buying or moving fish, whether importing ornamentals or moving stock between lakes, puts these codes and guidelines into operation. By doing so they will publicly demonstrate their wish to protect their businesses, the sectors that provide their and others livelihoods, and the natural and managed fish communities in the country.

Co-operative Action

For perhaps the first time the industry has co-operated in lobbying Government to mount a robust response to the KHV threat. In response, DEFRA has approached this complex problem with an open mind and has proved prepared to accept a mixed system of legislative measures and self-regulation by its industry partners.

- ENDS -

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Notes to Editors

1. Notice on Statutory Controls on KHV Disease

The Government has announced statutory controls on KHV. Details are available at <http://www.efishbusiness.co.uk/>

2. Notes on Protecting Fisheries

Notes on protecting fisheries from KHV are available from the Environment Agency at <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/news/1567428>

3. The Disease

KHV is a highly infectious disease of carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) - including common, ghost and koi carp – which causes very high mortalities among infected fish. Mortalities occur at water temperatures of 15-28°C and may diminish or cease above or below these temperatures. The disease is spread from fish to fish, although other agencies may be responsible for its transfer. Fish deaths may reach 80-100% of the stock within 10 days of the disease outbreak, and even seemingly healthy fish can succumb within 24-48 hours.

The first confirmed outbreaks of KHV were in 1998, since when it has spread rapidly to at least four continents. During 2006 it was found in 23 recreational fisheries in the UK, and it is known to cause widespread mortalities in ornamental fish. There is no known cure for the disease.

KHV became a notifiable disease in the UK on 6th April 2007. As part of the measures to combat the disease, DEFRA establish a KHV Steering Group, with members drawn from all sections of the relevant industries. Separate groups from the recreational fishing, ornamental fish and fish supply industries have worked on strategies to prevent and combat further KHV outbreaks, with a high degree of liaison between these groups.

2. Codes of Practice are Available

IFM Guide to the Management of Intensively Stocked Stillwaters

IFM Guide to Bio-security at Fisheries

IFM advice on KHV

<http://ifm.org.uk>

OATA Guide to Bio-security and the Ornamental Fish Industry

OATA Code for the Transport of Ornamental Fish
OATA Avoiding KHV <http://www.ornamentalfish.org/>

CFFTA Guide to Fish Transport
CFFTA advice on KHV
BTA Guide to Fish Transport <http://www.britishtROUT.co.uk/>
FWG Advice on Stocking Fish <http://www.saauk.org/>

4. The Fish Welfare Group

Just over two years ago the Carp Society, the English Carp Heritage Organisation (ECHO), the British Carp Study Group (BCSG) and the Specialist Anglers Alliance (SAA) convened a series of meetings to air and resolve potential differences and to try to co-ordinate a unified programme to cover all areas of carp fishing and carp fisheries.

This working group soon realised that many of their concerns on carp stock densities applied equally to fish populations in other types of fishery. Indeed, it became clear that there were wider concerns about various aspects of fishery management and fish welfare.

As a consequence, other specialist angling, fisheries, trade and governmental organisations were invited to participate in talks to explore options for meaningful solutions to these problems. Under the auspices of the SAA and the Angling Foundation, this wider audience participated in what transpired to be the inaugural meeting of the Fish Welfare Group, now adopted by FACT (Fisheries and Angling Conservation Trust Ltd) as an official working group.

A number of meetings of this enlarged group have been held to date, and a range of actions have been taken or listed for further investigation. The FWG is not an executive arm of angling or fisheries but a forum for the exchange of ideas between partners in the industry.

Participating organisations include:-

Anglers' Conservation Association
Angling Foundation
Angling Trades Association
Association of Stillwater Game Fishery Managers
British Carp Study Group
British Waterways
The Carp Society
Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science
CEMEX Fisheries
Coarse Fish Farmers' and Traders' Association
Department for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs
English Carp Heritage Organisation
Environment Agency
Fisheries and Angling Conservation Trust
Fish Veterinary Society
Game Conservancy Trust
Institute of Fishery Management
National Anguilla Club
National Association of Fisheries and Angling Consultatives

National Federation of Anglers
Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association
Premier Fisheries
Professional Coarse Fisheries Association
Sparsholt College
Specialist Anglers' Alliance

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