

Why and How We Should Quarantine

Spring is in the air, birds are chirping, and the fishies are up. As every red blooded Koi Kichi person is contemplating, "What fish should I get next"? We have an Auction and Sale coming up very soon and there will be some keepers there for us to add to our collections.

Before you take that new Hi Utsuri home we need to talk about the Big Q. That's right Quarantine. Quarantine is the best known method to reduce disease introductions. You gotta do it. There are several reasons to quarantine "ALL" new fish. Here are a few for consideration:

- The new fish "WILL BE STRESSED" and very susceptible to disease and parasite attack.
- Second, you do not want to subject your collection to an outbreak of any kind that the new guy may bring to your pond.
- Third, even though your pond is very clean of what you think are all those bugs you don't have, the new little fishie has not been subjected to what ever you have living there. On top of the stress of the auction, the ride home in a plastic critter receptacle, the new surroundings, and if you just float the bag and drop it in, utsuri will not be given the best chance for survival. We want the best chance to survive.

What is a Quarantine Tank?

Ideally, you want a tiny little version of your pond. You will need to have a pump, filtration, aeration, a net to cover the tank, a small aquarium heater, and do not forget to conduct water changes often, along with religious daily testing. Things you utilize for your Q tank "SHOULD NOT BE USED" in your regular pond. (Cross Contamination and stuff). What size tank you say. That depends on how many fish you buy at the auction and how big they are. In a pinch, a 50 gallon garbage can will do (cleaned and disinfected of course). Most feed and seed stores here in the south sell Rubbermaid 100 gal feed tanks fairly cheap (\$73). Larger containers of course are better depending on the size of your new fish. You can even put small fish into a 30 to 40 gallon aquarium. What ever works. The Important thing is that you have near-perfect H2O conditions all the time.

What Kind of Filtration?

The filtration need not be sophisticated. Small filters can be obtained from most pond supply dealers. It should have a mechanical section to filter solids, and a biological section to clear ammonia, and convert nitrites and nitrates. The tricky and time consuming part is to have a cycled filter before your fish get home. Think about adding some filter medium from your existing pond. Many hobbyists run their Q tank all the time to keep the filter cycled just in case they just can not live with out that sanke in the window.

Adding a pond fish to the Q Tank.

It has been proven that a good practice is to place one or two small koi from your pond into your Q tank to help cycle the filter and to introduce your pond conditions to the new fish. Use one that you would not mind losing just in case.

How Do I Treat The New Fish?

Once you get home with your new additions, again do not get into a big hurry. Don't start throwing a lot of chemicals on top of you're very stressed out, new and expensive fish. When you get the fish home, float the bag for at least 30 to 45 minutes before you add to the tank. Do not dump the bag contents of ammonia, poop laden water into your pristine Q tank. Have a cover for the tank to protect from jumpers and you may even want to float a large piece of Styrofoam to give a hiding place for the fish. (It makes them feel warm and cozy)

LET THEM REST for a few days. Observation of the new arrivals is a very good practice. The tank should start out with a very light salt load if any. May be less than .1% and then over the next week or so push the salt up to .3%. If you plan to treat with Proform C, salt will need to be zero. Please don't dump the salt into the tank and risk burning your fish. If rock salt touches their skin it will burn. Dissolve the salt in a bucket and distribute around the tank very S-L-O-W-L-E-Y. Do not feed for the first two to three days. When a fish is under stress they will expel the food not utilize the food for nutrition. Let the fish adjust first, they won't starve.

If you do not have a microscope to check for parasites and treat specifically, we must assume they have everything. Doc Johnson has a "Shotgun Treatment" that he recommends that wont hurt the fish. This is his recommendation slightly modified.

(1) Temperature should be 72 to 78 degrees in quarantine. Warm the fish no faster than one degree per hour, up to the mid seventies, or if you want to combat Koi Herpes Virus, use the same "one degree per hour" heating from their ambient temperature up to 86°F for four days with seven days being better. Heating your fish to 86 degrees will also kill Ich and ends bacteria overgrowth. Make sure you have plenty of O2 in warmer water.

- (2) PH must be buffered. Small Q tanks are subject to PH crash. (Check Daily along with ammonia.)
- (3) After two to three days and if you wish to treat with the broad spectrum Proform C, treat per instructions. 24 hours after the last Proform treatment then treat with salt.
- (4) Salt to 0.3 to 0.6% over a period of several days.
- (5) Feed Romet or Medikoi food. It will help control bacterial infections.
- (6) The Q tank can be treated with Dimilin, even with salt, to handily control comparatively rare but large parasites like Anchor Worms and Fish Lice.
- (7) Prizi or Prazi containing medications control of Flukes on Koi. A Formalin treatment *on the way* into the quarantine where the above will be applied will break the lifecycle of Costia and prevent it emerging in the quarantine tank.
- (8) Small and numerous Water Changes are a definite requirement. 10 to 15% every other day maybe. (Don't forget to replace the % salt after the water change)

Finally, Quarantine should last for at least 14 to 21 day after you complete treatments, so long as with water changes the water quality can be properly supported. Watch your fish for signs of stress or disease during the process.

Quarantine is an essential part of our hobby. Enjoy!

Koisan Joe