



This Month in the Koi Pond — Jerry Kyle, Koi Health Advisor (“KHA”)

Rules For Building a “Fail Safe Pond” & Why Don’t The Rules Work? Or, “Who’s the boss?”

One of my instructors laughed when I explained my fish load rule. He called it my “Fail Safe Rule.” One mature koi per 300 gallons avoids problems. The question arose when we were asked what we do if the power goes out. With the equivalent of only one mature koi per 300 gallons I just quit feeding, so I don’t need the bio-filter, and take a nap. Others may scurry around, panic, rent generators, panic some more, spray hydrogen peroxide, panic, and stir the pond with a boat oar between panics. I nap. With only one koi per 300 gallons of water, my fish are fine for an hour, day, or week. If the power is off more than an hour I will drain the filter but that is about all. I have learned if I follow the 300 gallon rule there will be no problems. Simple, huh? Love having no problems. Good rule that 300 gallon per mature fish rule.

Having a bio-filter rated for a minimum of double your pond size (wait, double that again), 4” bottom drain to a pre-filter, and eductor jets or air stones that fairly churn the water with aeration is a good rule and regular water changes is another. In addition, I added a Bakki style wet-dry filter behind the waterfall figuring there is no such thing as overkill (remember that rule too – “No such thing as overkill”) and with that what little green was in the water just disappeared. Poof. Don’t need a UV. Even out in the sun. I love these rules. Following them makes koi keeping so simple. I also love simple.

Soooo, reduced fish load, increase filtration, increase aeration, bottom drain, and I use a dribble through water change system. That’s flow through reduced down to only 100% change a month. Is it any wonder that in five years of koi keeping I have never had any health problems of any kind what-so-ever? Zip, nada, none. Made available the heated quarantine/hospital tank to others as I don’t have sick fish. Having that tank was another of those rules I learned in KHA. Just following the rules. Taking all those koi health classes has allowed me to help others but by following the rules my koi have stayed healthy. No problems if you just follow the rules. What could go wrong? Five years and nobody got sick. Sweet. Others experience problems but not this rule follower. Not for five years. Until now when I learned another rule. About Mother.

Mother makes her own rules. Her first rule is that she is the boss. Not me and my rules. Her rules. Her whims. Oh yea, and she can change or manipulate things anytime she chooses. I did say whims didn’t I? Such as warming things up for one week only in late winter or early spring and then immediately cooling off and holding back so pond water sits solidly in mid 60’s seemingly forever. I guess she decided to teach me a live and learn lesson. I have now learned Mother Nature is the boss and does not like me getting too smug about spouting rules. The only rule that matters is, Mother is in charge. Her and her whims. That is probably why my more experienced teachers only smiled when I quoted all the rules that proved why I have such excellent water quality and healthy koi. They knew mother would sooner or later teach me who the real boss is.

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Summertime, but the water still couldn't quite get to 70°F in Central California when I scraped and scoped the kids. Nice clean slime coat proved it pays to follow the rules. Caught another couple to be sure. Actually, to show off what a good koi keeper I am. When you are really good and follow the rules, flaunt it. What are the little tiny redness' on body and base of some fins? Never had that before. All water parameters are as good as it gets and no new arrivals so Mr. Perfect Waters' koi should not have this. I had salted coming out of spring as a precaution but let flow through clear it out first of June.

When Mother wants to make a point she does not mess around. Within three days tiny spots were ulcers. It felt like three minutes! When I told local med supplier I have never, ever, had bacterial infections he said, “Everyone has that!” I guess he meant how could I not? Not me, as I follow the rules and have perfect water. I think this year I may have been in too much of a hurry to get the salt out as I do not believe in permanently salting a pond, the immune system may not have been all the way up yet but, more importantly, Mother needed me to know I was not the boss and my rules don't govern everything.

Mother, I added a little KoiZyme to the water to compete with your bacteria for their food supply, raised the salt back up to 0.3 % help the osmoregulatory process, and will dip each koi in a Tricide-Neo bath to kick those bacteria in their you-know-what. I will not inject as that makes another little hole through which the bacteria can attack and I remember as a kid I was stressed when needles were stuck in me and it hurt. Since the koi are eating well the antibiotics can get in by feeding medicated food which the fish love as it sinks and is a more natural way for them to feed. My observation is also they tend to eat more if it sinks rather than floats and I am not as concerned with overfeeding as I am with getting the med in. My clear water makes observing them eat an easy thing to do and I assure you all are eating. You made your point and I apologize for taking you for granted by thinking I could control things with a few grandiose rules. I realize that besides not getting cocky I must remember there is only your rule and I will not take you for granted again. My rules don't hold a candle to your main rule of, "Don't mess with Mother Nature!" Thanks for letting the water warm up but please don't trigger a spawn until we can get past this bacterial problem. Please? Mother? Mother?