

## Beneficial Bacteria for Koi Fish

**As nutritional options for koi continue to expand, take a look at beneficial bacteria.**

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### It's Alive

Another ingredient trend receiving significant attention in the pond industry is the injection of beneficial bacteria into foods. "All of our foods contain living microorganisms," said Carolyn Weise, consumer relationship manager for Ecological Laboratories Inc. "This addition seems to have generated a lot of interest because it makes sense. Fish need to be able to utilize the well-planned nutrition we put into the foods, and the bacteria will help them do that."

Hikari's high-end Saki-Hikari line contains beneficial bacteria that accelerate the digestive process, thereby improving absorption and reducing waste output, said Chris Clevers, president of Hikari Sales USA Inc. "Once in the digestive tract of the fish, the microorganisms become alive and work to take up nutrition that pathogenic or bad bacteria need to survive," he said. "By eliminating the food source, we can reduce the impact of the bad bacteria on the fish. This activity also causes the digestive capacity of the intestine to increase substantially, thereby enabling better digestion and utilization of the nutrition and color-enhancing ingredients — hence, better growth rates and coloration."

In addition, Clevers said that when waste exits the koi's body, the microorganisms remain active and decompose the waste. "This decomposition process makes the waste more powder-like and makes it much easier for the biological action in the pond to eliminate it," he said. "This can result in improved water quality with continued use."

"In a pond environment, the bacteria rapidly multiply into such vast quantities that they out-compete pathogenic bacteria for available living space," said Darius Bozek, vice president of marketing for Dainichi Fish Food. This "lowers these harmful bacteria numbers to levels at which they are harmless to otherwise healthy fish."

Customers are just now growing aware of the option of foods containing living microorganisms, said Brigitte Burchett, president of The Pond Market in St. Louis, Mo. "The more-dedicated koi owners probably already know about these foods, but we try to point out the benefits of such foods to our customers," she said. "The foods are good for the general digestive health of the fish, and therefore for the pond itself."

California-based writer Lori Luechtefeld's complete article, "Feeding Frenzy," appeared in the June/July 2007 issue.