

MANAGEMENT AND CONTACTS:

The Environment Agency delivers a service to its customers, with the emphasis on authority and accountability at the most local level possible. It aims to be cost-effective and efficient and to offer the best service and value for money.

Head Office is responsible for overall policy and relationships with national bodies including Government.

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

'Buyer Beware'

Your guide to stocking fish

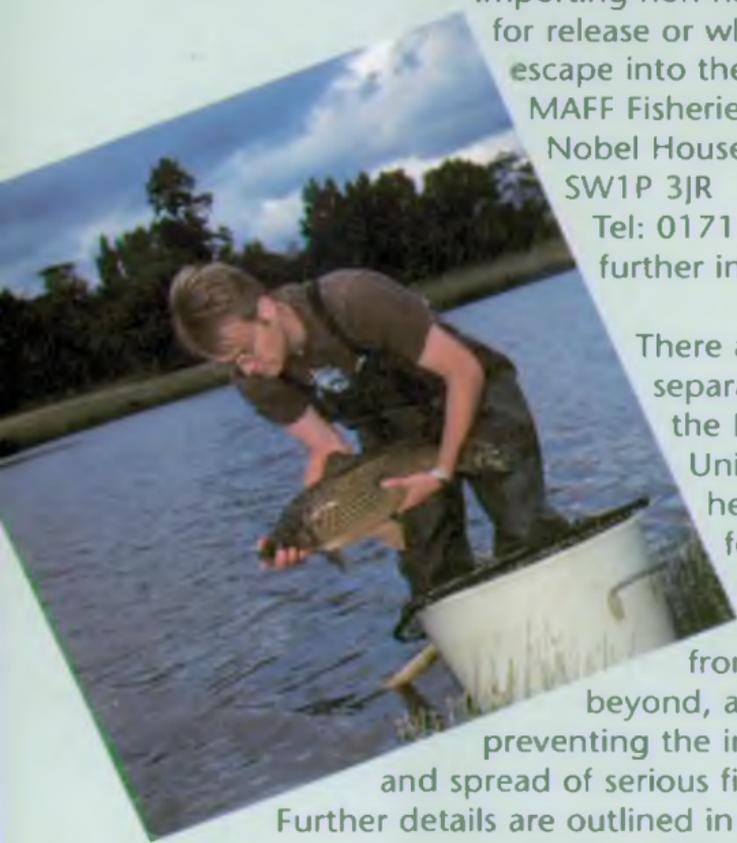
Consents under Section 30, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975



Thinking of stocking some fish?

This leaflet explains The Environment Agency rules on fish introductions (Section 30, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975) and the common sense things you can do to protect yourself and your fishery when buying/stocking fish (Buyer Beware).

There are separate and additional rules under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 if you are importing non-native species for release or which could escape into the wild. Contact MAFF Fisheries Division II, Nobel House, London. SW1P 3JR
Tel: 0171 238 5931 for further information.



There are also separate rules under the European Union (EU) fish health regime for the import of live fish into Great Britain from the EU and beyond, aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of serious fish diseases.

Further details are outlined in the booklets "A guide to importing fish" and "Combating fish disease". Copies are available free of charge from MAFF's Fish Diseases Laboratory, Weymouth. DT4 8UB Tel: 01305 206673/4.

What is Section 30?

Before introducing (stocking) any fish (or fish spawn) into inland waters, you must obtain the **written** consent of The Environment Agency. **Failure to meet this obligation is a criminal offence and could lead to prosecution, with a fine of up to £2,500.** The legislation that states this requirement is Section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.



What are the changes to Section 30?

The Agency's policy on Section 30 has recently been reviewed.

- A new National application form for Section 30 has been developed.
- A National policy for Section 30 administration and requirements has been produced.
- There are now two categories of health check: Mandatory and non-mandatory.

The need for prior written consent for all fish introductions is a legal requirement. This applies to any inland water including all private fisheries and stillwaters.

Why did we make the changes, what are the benefits?

We have made these changes to help you, the customer. National standards will mean that all applications will be considered consistently across the country. You won't feel that the rules are different in different parts of England and Wales.



BUYER BEWARE BUYER BEWARE BUYER BEWARE

What Is Buyer Beware?

We are reminding you as a fish purchaser that any fish stocking carries with it risks, and it is in your best interests to minimise those risks. If you don't minimise the risks, your entire fishery could be at stake.

How can I use Buyer Beware?

The following 10 point code has been designed to help you reduce the risks associated with fish stocking.

1 Do you need to stock?

- Get professional advice in the first instance (contact your local Agency Fisheries Officer). Stocking is often not the way to improve your fishery. In fact you may be doing more harm than good!

2 Make sure all relevant paperwork is in order

- Personally make sure that all the Section 30 consents have been obtained. In law, the introducer must possess the Agency's written consent before the stocking takes place.

3 No supplier is Environment Agency or MAFF recommended

- Although there are many reputable suppliers of fish, no fish farms or dealers are recommended or approved by the Agency or MAFF. Anyone claiming to be recommended is giving false information.

4 Only buy from reputable farms or dealers

- Follow the recommendations of fishery owners you know who have had a good service. Ask your supplier for customers references and contact them. Beware of bogus customers. Shop around and always think "Quality first: Cost second".

5 Be a careful buyer

- Buying fish is just like buying anything else. Protect yourself by paying by cheque, obtain a receipt, and keep copies of all of the paperwork.

6 If possible attend the removal

- Try to be present when fish are collected from the source water. Make sure that the fish are delivered straight to your fishery and not held or mixed together with fish from different sources in transit. Make sure that health checked fish are not mixed with un-checked fish.

7 Be there on stocking!

- Always be present when the fish are stocked into your fishery. Insist on a delivery date and time which gives you time to prepare for the arrival of your fish.
- Don't accept things you, the customer, are not happy with, no matter what the supplier says. Don't put your entire fishery at risk.
- Never accept fish in a poor condition
- Never accept species you have not ordered
- Never accept fish at night - darkness can hide quality and quantity
- Don't be pressurised by the supplier - remember you are the customer

8 Never accept fish unless you are satisfied that they are healthy

- You can't tell if a fish is healthy just by looking at it. Health checks are the best way of ensuring that fish are healthy.
- Do the fish you are stocking have a valid health check?
- Was the health check produced by a competent person (*A recognised fish health expert*)?
- If you are not sure or confused then contact your local Agency Fisheries Officer, *before you introduce the fish*.
- Remember: a health check only applies to the fish species checked. If it is for carp, then it only covers carp!
- Health checks don't guarantee the fish are healthy, but they do provide the best protection possible

9 Make sure you are the boss!

- Ensure that the supplier is willing to comply with your requests.
- If the supplier is not willing to comply - then ask why not? You are the customer. You can always take your business elsewhere.

10 Ask!

- Ask The Environment Agency for help and advice.
- Contact your local Agency Fisheries Officer who will treat your enquiries in confidence. He or she will always be pleased to advise you.

The diseases you are trying to prevent represent a real and significant threat to your fishery. Once they are present they are nearly impossible to eradicate - prevention is the only method of protecting your fishery.



Why does The Environment Agency require health checks?

As part of the consenting procedure the Agency considers the effects that the fish stocking will have on the receiving and adjacent water; including things like health, fish ecology and the ecology of other animals and plants.

One of the biggest risks when stocking fish is that the fish will carry diseases into the receiving water. Bitter experience has shown that entire fisheries can be wiped out by disease, even when the fish introduced appeared to be healthy.

The Agency has a duty to balance the need to protect fish stocks with the need to allow individual fishery owners to have a greater say in what happens to their stocks *where the risk to other fisheries is minimal*. For this reason we will insist that health checks are obtained where the risk to other fisheries is high and will be more flexible where discrete stocks are concerned.

Mandatory health checks will be required where fish are to be moved into rivers, streams, drains or canals or where the risk of fish movement into or from the water is likely. This will provide the maximum protection for these stocks.

Health checks will not normally be required in waters where the risk of fish escape is minimal (e.g. enclosed waters). Such health checks are normally non-mandatory (voluntary) but there may be occasions where we will still insist on a health examination.

Regardless of the Agency's requirement for health checks we stress that establishing the health of fish before any stocking is essential. We encourage everyone to follow the simple guidelines which follow overleaf.



How will I know if a mandatory health check is required?

Having received your Section 30 application, your local Agency Fisheries Officer will tell you whether or not a health check is required before he allows your stocking under Section 30.

Who does the health checks?

The Agency's National Fisheries Laboratory perform mostly mandatory health checks. Several private consultants also have the

required training and experience, and offer mandatory and non-mandatory health checks which are accepted by the Agency. MAFF laboratories also undertake health examinations.

Who do I contact if I need to discuss Section 30 issues?

Your first line of contact should be via your local Agency Fisheries Officer (contact the general enquiry line overleaf), however if you have enquiries about specific health issues please feel free to contact Fish Health at the Fisheries Laboratory on 01480 414581 or by fax on 01480 433873.

Section 30, Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975*

*A person shall be guilty of an offence if he introduces any fish or spawn of fish into an inland water, or has in his possession any fish or spawn of fish intending to introduce it into an inland water, unless he first obtains the written consent of the water authority** or the inland water is one which consists exclusively of, or of part of, a fish farm and which, if it discharges into another inland water, does so only through a conduit constructed or adapted for the purpose.*

* Including an amendment under Section 34, Salmon Act 1986

** The authority is the consenting authority, ie The Environment Agency

