

Fish Handling by Carolyn Weise

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There are a few basics to know when picking up a fish for examination or moving from a tank to the pond. First is to be sure your hands are clean and free of any lotions or creams. Whatever you have on your hands will disperse in the pond water and can irritate the koi when handling. Second, don't attempt to handle the fish with dry hands. Always wet your hands first. I learned from a koi breeder that when holding a fish in front of me, the fish's face should be toward my body, the tail out. This lessens the "fight" and helps me to keep the fish still while I am holding onto him. If I have the fish pointed away from me, it's going to try to get away. A larger fish can easily wrest itself from my grip. I grasp the fish firmly but gently around the pectoral fins from its belly and support the weight of the fish with my other hand by the anal fin (under the rear end of the fish, toward the tail). In this way, the tail can move, but the fish should stay securely within my grasp. While it may be embarrassing for me to drop a fish, it can be ever more damaging to the poor fish when it hits the ground. With its face into my stomach, the fish holds still. Fish do not like to be carried (by hand). It's easy to knock off scales by moving them by hand and even easier to interfere with the natural slime coat protection. There are bacteria on the fish and bacteria on your hands, neither of which are welcome on the other. If possible, have someone help you and have a net handy. When handling fish for examination, have the microscope set up beforehand. Set up the anesthesia tank near the pond. (And never, ever leave the fish in the anesthesia solution unattended.) Try to make this minimally stressful for the fish. Use a wet towel upon which to place the fish for examination. Have fresh clean water ready to receive the fish after scraping is done.

Carolyn Weise is a lifetime fish & wildlife hobbyist/advocate, with 20+ years of pond care and ownership. She attended the KHA and UGA koi health seminars on fish diagnostics, prevention and intervention. Carolyn has a background in Ornamental Horticulture from SUNY, Farmingdale, NY. Since August, 2005, she has worked for Ecological Laboratories, Inc. as technical support staff and pond expert. She relocated to Florida in 2006 where she is an active member in Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife, NRA, St. Katharine Drexel Church choir, and she was a member of the former NAPP. She is editor and writer for Mid-Atlantic Koi Club magazine and an active member since 1996, holding VP positions and has been awarded Koi Person of the Year several times. She is the author & publisher of [ABC's of Ponds](#).

