

****ASK THE TAFE TEAM****

**With TAFE Queensland South West Rural Teacher, Darryl Aspinall
26 April, 2016**

Question: What are 'Carp' and how are we controlling them in our waterways?

Answer: Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) is a freshwater fish introduced into Australia from 1859 and have established self-sustaining populations. Carp are widespread throughout the inland waterways of south-east Australia with recognised detrimental effect on native aquatic plants, animals and general river health, particularly through their destructive feeding habits.

There is public concern that the high numbers and widespread distribution of carp pose a major threat to aquatic ecosystems. This has resulted in increasing interest from catchment management groups to actively manage carp. While research is progressing to develop large scale methods to control carp, there are existing methods which local communities and landholders can utilise.

What techniques are used to control carp?

South West Natural Resource Management (SWNRM) conduct annual surveys examining removal activities and their impacts on carp populations using a combination of treatment and control sites

SWNRM has found that the most efficient technique used to control carp is electrofishing, and the second most efficient technique is the hopper traps.

Electrofishing generates an electric field and the electrical current causes muscle contraction and temporary paralysis. This causes the fish to become stunned and float to the surface where they can be netted. Stunned fish recover quickly once the power is switched off.

Hopper traps are automated feed dispensers which are situated with a series of nets which attract carp into the trap.

How can we as individuals or communities help in carp control?

While recreational fishing is not seen as an effective means of carp control in itself, it can be valuable as part of a management program. Local communities conduct carp removal events – carp fishing competitions which are popular in many regions. These competitions are an opportunity to remove carp from a localised area and are a fun way of increasing community awareness. They can be used as fundraising events to raise money for river rehabilitation projects or restocking of native species.

Commercial carp fishing occurs in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. There is some evidence that suggests that commercial fishing may help to keep carp numbers under control, especially when repeated over a period of time and by targeting carp breeding 'hotspots'. Carp have a very high population recovery rate and numbers can quickly return to original levels. Fishing can be a useful short-term management tool while techniques for wider control are being developed.

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Harvested carp cannot be sold unless the carp are taken by a commercial fisher who sells them. Alternatively, the caught fish can be used by a carp processing company for example 'Charlie Carp' which is an all-purpose fertiliser for your garden. For smaller quantities, options include eating, using as pet food or composting.

Are there any rules with carp fishing?

Normal fishing rules apply to control pest fish. Animal ethics best practice should guide humane killing of caught carp.

For more information about TAFE Queensland South West's rural and agriculture offerings or for any other courses, please visit www.tafesouthwest.edu.au or call 1300 914 754.

Disclaimer: The comments provided in this article are general in nature only and are not a substitute for professional advice. The author accepts no responsibility for any action taken by a reader in relation to this article.

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