

## Frequently asked questions

Q: *When do fish first need feeding?*

A: In artificial containments such as tanks, raceways or cages there is no or very little natural food, so all the fish's diet must come from artificial feeds. Fry born into this near sterile environment will need feed as soon as their yolk sac is used up (typically three days after hatching for many species).

Q: *How often do fish need feeding?*

A: Juvenile fish should ideally be fed three or more times per day, but in reality this is often impossible to do; so two feedings per day is the norm, with one per day for sub-adult fish.

Q: *How much should fish be fed?*

A: Artificial feeds deteriorate very quickly in water, so any feeds not eaten immediately will quickly spoil and become little more than expensive pond 'fertilizer'. The general rule is to feed what the fish will consume in five minutes.

Q: *Can I feed the fish with kitchen waste?*

A: Yes, most tilapia, carp and catfish will readily consume kitchen waste, especially vegetable, meat and grain waste. If introduced in reasonable quantities, what is not immediately eaten will break down to fertilize the pond. Fish reared in tanks or raceways are not usually fed such wastes due to the threat of water pollution.

Q: *How do I know that the fish are eating the expensive feed I am throwing in?*

A: Always feed the fish at the same time and place each day: fish soon become used to this and you should be able to see the increased activity in the water when fish are feeding. To check, you can inspect the tank or pond bottom afterwards to see whether uneaten or rotting feed is present; this will reveal that you are either feeding excess feed or the fish are not eating it at all.

Q: *Are all dry fish pellets equal in terms of quality and palatability to the fish?*

A: No, definitely not; there are some very poor-quality feeds available that have very little food value at all, so only purchase from a recommended source. Some of these feeds clearly taste unpleasant to the fish too, and so they will not eat them.

Q: *Do I need to feed my fish fry with expensive, carefully formulated fry diets?*

A: No, in general most fry and fingerlings can be reared quite successfully on ordinary crumbles and small pellets, if specifically designed for trout, carp or catfish, combined with some natural foods where possible (like green water full of phytoplankton). Specialist diets are generally only used for higher-value fry like ornamentals or for mono-sex tilapia production. Juvenile catfish *Clarias gariepinus* require a yeast-based artificial diet to achieve high survival and even growth.

Q: *How do I know that the fish are profiting from eating an artificial pelleted ration?*

A: As the fish grow you will need to take regular samples from the pond, tank or cage, to assess the growth rate. These growth figures can then be compared to available growth patterns for unfed fish under similar environmental conditions to see whether the use of supplemental feeding is working well and makes good sense economically.

