

CARP CONTROL IN EASTERN NSW

Aquablue Seafood's Australian Bass Hatchery 2007

Background

Carp is a species that is native to many temperate regions of Asia. The carp is closely related to the Goldfish and is the largest member of the Cyprinidae family. Carp and goldfish are introduced noxious species that are increasingly becoming a problem in coastal NSW.



The common carp are a major pest in Australia because they contribute significantly to the degradation of waterways in a number of different ways. Carp will increase water turbidity in rivers streams, dams and ponds. They will uproot aquatic plants, and sifting through to bottom sediment during feeding. The greater the water turbidity, the less light can penetrate, which stunts surrounding plant growth. This in turn can lead to the erosion and subsidence of river and lake banks, which further contributes to water turbidity. Carp suck in the sediments filter any useful particles out and then spit the waste sediments out. They feed from at the waters edge to the deep bottom sediments. This feeding behaviour rapidly undermines banks and adds turbidity to the water. In lakes, ponds and dams it also leads to the sedimentation and shallowing of these impoundments

Carp will also compete with native fish for habitat and food resources. Carp by their nature and feeding habits will change the natural habitat and this also detrimentally impacts on native fish.

Carp are prolific breeders and rapidly reproduce under conditions that are unsuitable for native fish species. This can lead to a great abundance of carp, especially in the warm, still habitats they

prefer, combined with their generally large body size, can result in very high carp biomass. Population densities up to one carp per square metre of water surface area have been recorded in impoundments. Such dense populations not only have an impact on food-web structure, but also excrete large quantities of wastes into the water which is a major consideration for water quality and the promotion of nuisance algal and cyanobacterial growth (blue green algae).

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Carp Control

Control of carp is increasingly becoming a major task for management groups, councils and water authorities. Targeted fishing campaigns, netting and electrofishing are just some of the more mainstream methods of reducing carp numbers. The problem occurs that these methods generally only target the large adult carp and this is a two edged sword approach. Carp can be self limiting as they eat their own eggs. As you remove more of the adults then those that are left still breed but not as many eggs get eaten so this allows more juveniles to survive and you are back to square one in a few years. It is essential in any carp control program to have in place plans to reduce juvenile carp numbers.

Increasingly local councils, environmental groups and water authorities on the eastern drainage are using Australian Bass as part of their carp control programs. Australian Bass are a predatory species that actively hunt and eat small goldfish and carp. They will not eat the large adult animals but they can seriously reduce the recruitment of new juvenile carp into future adult breeders. Carp are a noxious pest species that can breed to phenomenal numbers if not controlled.



Increasingly Australian bass fingerlings are being stocked into lakes, dams and retention ponds to control carp numbers as part of carp control programs. Australian bass love small carp and will devour them by the thousands. As a predatory species bass have a relatively large mouth and insatiable appetite that make them perfect for recreational fishing as they will attack and eat lures just as they will eat carp. Australian bass are purchased as small fingerlings and stocked into rivers, streams, lakes and impoundments around October November each year. This is the start of the Carp breeding season, carp lay their eggs and will also eat some of their own eggs. When the eggs that are not eaten hatch you have the small predatory bass in the system to eliminate the juveniles. This is a simple environmentally friendly biological control of juvenile carp that would generally have the full support of the community as Australian Bass are a native species that are a prized sporting and eating fish.

For many people this is an ideal method of carp control, Australian Bass eat carp but carp do not eat bass so they will stay in the system constantly eating carp. Stocking bass each year at the start of the carp breeding season will not fully eliminate carp from a system but it is an important valuable weapon against carp and should be utilized in Carp Control Programs wherever possible.

