

National Carp Control Program



The Commonwealth Government has funded a National Carp Control Plan (NCCP) that is evaluating the possibility of using a virus as a biocontrol agent to eradicate the European carp, a species introduced to Australia. This fish has unfortunately been highly successful at surviving in Australian waterways and has decimated many of the native fish species in the Murray-Darling basin, now representing as much as 80% of the total fish numbers in the river. Preparation for the control plan has included a wide array of research, consultation, and assessment activities.

Local and state governments along with many other environmental groups support carp control but hold concerns regarding the potential socioeconomic and ecological impacts of mass fish kills, including making sure drinking water remains safe and free of negative impacts. Water authorities across the country are committed to facilitate the feasibility assessment process. This includes identifying risks to utilities, estimating our response capacity and also how much it will cost to implement the response.

Preparing for all scenarios (FAQ)

Australian water utilities established a collaborative research project between the NCCP and Water Research Australia (WaterRA) to specifically explore potential risks and costs to water services which could follow large carp kills. The highest priority was maintaining world-class public health protection. Some answers to frequently asked questions are shown below:



Can my family or pets catch the virus?

No, the Cyprinid Herpes Virus (CyHV-3) is specific to certain carp species and cannot infect humans, cats or dogs. No known susceptibility of native fish and crustaceans has been identified.



What if I have goldfish or an aquarium?

Typical aquarium fish are not at risk, including the common goldfish. While Japanese koi carp can be infected, the virus generally requires direct fish-to-fish contact for transmission and the free virus has limited survival in the environment. Importantly, the virus is very unlikely to survive the water treatment process. A number of scientific studies have shown that it is easily inactivated by the existing disinfection processes used to ensure the protection of public health every day.



Have all the possible water quality problems that might happen been investigated?

Australian water utilities are fully engaged in the process to decide if and when the virus is released and are protecting your water supply. While fish clean up strategies will still be very important to minimise effects on the river environment and source water quality, at our current best estimates, management of drinking water should be within the existing capacity of treatment plant technologies.



Will the virus release affect the taste of water supply from my tap?

We will not provide you with water that is unsafe and will manage the supply to minimise off-flavours and odours. Large drinking water supplies are usually tested for tastes and odours and if any are detected, most treatment plants have additional treatment options that can be brought online to remove them.