

Fall & Winter Feeding Tips

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

How you feed your fish in the fall and winter can have a large impact on their health through the winter to the spring. Spring is a time when fish are less hardy from winter and the fluctuating temperatures add to their stress level, making them vulnerable to disease.

Floating food such as flakes or freeze dried foods should be soaked first before feeding. For all types of fish this can be a great way to add [vitamins](#) to their diet. Vitamins B and C, and spirulina are great supplements as well as a small amount of wheat germ oil. Fish oils can be a great source of energy for your fish.

Goldfish do not eat as much food as koi, but would benefit from a variety in their diet also. Fancy goldfish, though, can have problems sucking in too much air when taking food from the surface, causing swim bladder problems. For this reason it is wise to feed them [food](#) that slowly sinks.

As the cooler temperatures arrive, you'll want to start getting your fish ready for the winter ahead. The only way you can possibly feed your fish correctly as the weather cools is to know the temperature of the water. If you do not have a [thermometer](#), this is the time to get one.

Once the water temperature lowers to 60°F, your fishes' staple food should be mixed with a [wheat germ base](#) that is lower in protein. When the water temperatures reach 50°F the staple food should be switched to wheat germ based foods exclusively. Proteins are much harder to digest than other nutrients. The wheat germ diet can continue to be fed all winter if the water temperature doesn't get below 40°F.

Important: Do not feed if there is any chance of the temperatures dropping below 40°F within a few days. Fish are not capable of proper digestion in cold water and the food can decay in their system, sending bacteria into the bloodstream and killing the fish.

At 55°F the fish's metabolism starts to slow, reducing its intake requirements. Once the water temperatures go below 40°F, it's time to stop feeding until spring.

Anytime you are feeding when it's below 60°F, keep in mind the bacteria in your filter are also slowing their activity. They no longer reproduce, and they will die off or go dormant when extreme water temperatures are experienced. It's a good idea to test the water regularly to make sure

ammonia and nitrite aren't showing up.