Your koi care checklist

Prepare the pond first. Observe before feeding. Use water tests and a written record to guide the next step.

Before bringing koi home

- ☐ Plan space for adult koi, safe access, and equipment you can maintain.
- ☐ Install filtration and aeration; establish biological filtration before stocking.
- ☐ Test the source water and arrange treatment for chlorine or chloramine when present.
- ☐ Prepare separate quarantine equipment, a backup plan, and an experienced contact.

At each daily visit

- ☐ Observe swimming, breathing, skin, fins, and changes from each fish's usual behavior.
- ☐ Confirm actual water flow, aeration, pond level, and clear equipment intakes.
- ☐ Feed only when conditions are suitable; match portions to water temperature, appetite, and feed instructions.
- ☐ Remove accessible debris and note unusual behavior, leaks, or equipment changes.

Review regularly and after changes

- ☐ Record temperature, ammonia, nitrite, pH, and alkalinity; track nitrate and check oxygen when needed.
- ☐ Test more often in new or unstable ponds and after refills, stocking, treatment, or equipment problems.
- ☐ Service filters as their design requires. Preserve biological filtration and confirm flow after restarting.
- ☐ Plan controlled refills, seasonal care, spare equipment, and clear caretaker instructions.

When fish are in distress

Severe gasping, loss of balance, rapid decline, or deaths need prompt fish-health help alongside equipment and water checks. Do not wait to finish this checklist or add a mixture of guessed treatments.

Pond observations and test log

Keep units and test methods consistent. A trend is more useful than an isolated number.

Pond / keeper: _____

Fish-health contact: _____

Date / time	Temp. (unit)	Ammonia (unit)	Nitrite (unit)	pH	KH (unit)	Nitrate (unit)

Record dissolved oxygen separately when measured. Note whether your ammonia kit reports total ammonia and keep the kit method with this log.

What changed? What will you check next?

Fish behavior / appetite: _____

Feeding / refill / filter service: _____

Action / follow-up / contact: _____

Full guide and supporting references

Koi-Fish.com beginner care guide

Merck Veterinary Manual: Routine Health Care of Fish

UF/IFAS: Responsible Ornamental Fish Ownership (FA124)