

Salmon Transport Instructions

Transferring fry from your tank and transporting them to the release site can be stressful for fish. These directions have been developed to ensure their best possible health.

General Notes

Fish depend on ample air. Test your aerator before transport to ensure it is working and that it has a weighted aerator stone that sinks into the water. It is important to test that the air stone will remain on the bottom of the bucket during transport - fry have died when the air stone floats. The aerator will ride on top of the lid while the air stone is in the bucket.

For fish safety, there should be nothing in your transport bucket except fish, water, and the aerator stone. You may use a cooling pack to cool water on site but remove during transport to avoid crushing fry. Prepare cooling packs by freezing some tank water and placing cubes in sealed plastic bags.

Transferring fish from your tank to the transport bucket should be done on the release day as close to your departure time as possible. It will take 30-60 minutes, depending on experience. It is a good plan to assign someone to collect the fry while having someone separate assigned to managing students. Plan ahead to make this a calm experience for both you and your fish.

Equipment Needed

- one or two 5-gallon buckets for removing water from the tank
- one clean 5-gallon bucket for transporting the fry, preferably dark in color to reduce the light stress on the fish, and/or a large towel to cover bucket and further reduce light
- one lid for the transport bucket with a small hole near center large enough for the aerator air hose to pass through
- rechargeable (lithium battery) aerator with hose and **weighted** air stone.
- several aquarium fish nets of various sizes.
- extra/new batteries for the aerator if your aerator uses batteries

Preparing Your Tank

Vacuum clean the bottom of the tank on the day(s) prior to collecting the fry. Consider a water change the day before release. Dirty water makes the process more difficult and more stressful for the fry.

Prior to netting the fry, unplug the chiller, chiller pump, and any filters. Remove enough water from the tank so about 8 inches remain. Remove as many obstacles in the tank as possible including large rocks, decoration(s), and the air sponge. The tank should look relatively “empty.”

Transferring Fry from Tank to Bucket

1. Fill your bucket 2/3 full of water from the tank – more water will slosh out during travel.
2. Place the bucket on a sturdy location close to the tank so that you can quickly handle the fry from the tank to the bucket.
3. Prepare the aerator. Separate the hose from the aerator, thread the hose through the hole in the lid (inside to outside), and reconnect the hose to the aerator. Ensure there are plenty of bubbles coming from the air stone.
4. Move slowly while netting fry so they are not injured. The last few fry can be the most challenging to net, so be patient and go slow.
 - a. Use one net to push the fish and one to catch them
 - b. Grab the bottom of the net with the fish before turning the net upside down into the bucket. Then drop the net through the net frame so no fish get caught.
 - c. Be sure to check the corners and other places of the tank for stragglers.
5. Replace the lid with the aerator on the bucket. Verify the aerator produces ample bubbles.

Clean up instructions

After all fry are released, pour any water remaining in the bucket onto nearby grass or brush. Collect all your equipment including the plastic cups.

Plan to clean up the tank/equipment in the next few days while the hoses, tank and filters are still somewhat ‘soft’ and more easily cleaned. The goal is to have everything cleaned and dried for the off-season. Anything left slightly wet in the off-season has the potential to develop harmful black mold.