



**Isle of Man**  
Government  
*Reillys Ellan Vannin*

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE**

*Rheynn Chymmyltaght, Bee as Eirinys*



**COARSE FISH POLICY**  
**APRIL 2015**



## **Introduction**

Aside from European eel, brook lamprey, river lamprey, three-spined stickleback, nine-spined stickleback and minnow, none of which are of recreational interest, coarse fish (freshwater fish other than salmonids) are not native to the Isle of Man. There is potential for non-native fish to damage the Island's native fish populations and aquatic habitats, as well as threatening the Island's fish disease-free status.

All of the non-native freshwater fish species known to be present on the Island are of recreational interest. A survey conducted in 2008 on the status of the Island's coarse fish populations led to the acknowledgement of a small number of private coarse fisheries on the Island and the introduction of an Isle of Man Government coarse fish angling licence, enabling anglers to fish for freshwater fish other than salmon, migratory trout, trout, rainbow trout and eels in a private or commercial coarse fishery, and at the DEFA-managed Eairy Dam. While coarse fish are largely confined to still-waters, perch are known to have been present in a few of the Island's rivers and streams for an unknown but certainly substantial number of years. However, apparently due to limited suitable habitat, they have never become prolific enough to pose a detectable problem for native fish stocks.

Currently there are no established commercial coarse fisheries in the Island. The Department acknowledges that such fisheries may have positive economic benefits for the Isle of Man by adding another element to the package of angling opportunities available. However it is vital that any such development does not compromise the health of the Island's native wildlife.

The Department's policy on coarse fish, which was reviewed and revised in 2015 by the Fisheries Directorate in conjunction with Biodiversity and Animal Health Officers, aims to protect the Island's freshwater ecology by imposing strict limitations on movement and importation of fish species with potential to harm native wildlife and habitat, and the economically important fish disease-free status.

## **Legislative background**

Under the Wildlife Act 1990, it is an offence to release or allow the escape into the wild, any animal of a kind which is not ordinarily in and is not a regular visitor to the Island in a wild state, or any animal listed in Part I of Schedule 8 of the Act, except under licence from the Department.

Under the Fisheries Act 2012, it is an offence to intentionally introduce any live fish into inland waters without the consent of the Department. It is also an offence under this Act to engage in aquaculture except under and in accordance with an aquaculture licence granted by the Department with the consent of (in the case of inland waters) Manx Utilities.

The Aquatic Animal Health Regulations 2009, require all 'put and take fisheries' (defined as ponds or other installations where the population is maintained only for recreational fishing by restocking with aquaculture animals) to be authorised, and also require that any newly-discovered populations of Spring Viraemia of Carp (SVC)-susceptible species (e.g. carp and tench) be tested for the disease. Spring Viraemia of Carp is a notifiable disease and its presence on the Island would remove the Island's disease-free status for SVC, materially damaging fish-egg export markets as a result.

The importation of fish from countries that are officially free from SVC and other specified diseases, in accordance with EU Regulations, is not prohibited by any fish health measure. However, under the Importation of Freshwater Fish Regulations 1985, it is an offence to import or remove into the Island any live salmon or freshwater fish or any ova or fry of any salmon or freshwater fish, except under the authority of, and in accordance with the conditions contained in a licence issued by the Department.

## **Policy**

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the term 'coarse fish' refers to those species listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act 1990 and 'coarse fishery' refers to bodies of water where fishing for such species occurs.

There is a presumption against extension of the number of ponds containing the coarse fish species, which are listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act 1990, namely:

perch (*Perca fluviatilis*)

roach (*Rutilus rutilus*)

rudd (*Scardinius erythrophthalmus*)

roach x rudd hybrids (*Scardinius* spp.)

common/mirror carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)

tench (*Tinca tinca*)

This presumption will only be waived to allow the establishment of a new coarse fishery in instances where a comprehensive written business case is submitted to the Department, the details of which provide a compelling argument for the economic benefits of the proposal as well as proving, as far as reasonably possible, that stocking of the pond with coarse fish would;

- pose negligible risk to native wildlife and habitat, on or off the site
- pose negligible risk to the Island's economically important fish disease-free status
- not threaten the upholding of the general presumption against allowing an increase in the range of coarse fish on the Island, particularly those species most likely to impact on native wildlife should they escape to the wild

The recognition by the Department of any coarse fishery also depends upon the owner accepting responsibility for the costs of any ongoing health testing that the Department may require.

Should an additional existing population of the coarse fish listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act 1990 be discovered, the Department may consider recognising the population and allowing it to remain in situ providing there is no compelling reason why this may be inappropriate. Such reasons might include:

- The fish are viewed as being an animal health risk
- There is a significant risk of escape into other wild habitats

- The presence of these species of fish in a RAMSAR wetland site or other sites designated for their wetland importance is harmful
- The fish are threatening scarce and/or vulnerable native species
- The fish have been illegally introduced to the location

The owner of any such newly discovered population, who wishes the Department to assent to it remaining in situ, will be responsible for the costs of any tests or surveys e.g. disease testing, fish scale reading, wildlife survey, deemed by the Department as necessary to establish whether there is any notifiable disease present or any other compelling reason for the population to be removed.

Where a site has coarse fish listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act 1990 but is deemed by the Department not to have been stocked in a legal manner or is assessed as posing an unacceptable risk to native ecology, the targeted removal of fish through the use of piscicides or drainage is an option on health or ecological grounds, subject to the specific approval of the Minister. Ecological grounds may include risk of escape into other habitats, presence in RAMSAR or other important wetland sites, and risk to scarce or vulnerable native species.

Should a population of non-native freshwater fish species not currently listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act be discovered in the wild, the population will be deemed, in accordance with the Wildlife Act 1990, to have been introduced illegally and the Department will remove the population by an appropriate method approved by the Minister. Other than the species currently listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife Act 1990, the importation and introduction of coarse fish species of recreational interest is considered undesirable and will not be sanctioned.

The Department may consider licensing the movement of coarse fish between recognised coarse fisheries, according to an approved method statement, providing the species in question is recognised as already present at the receiving location.

Transfers of coarse fish into a recognised coarse fishery must be from another recognised on-Island location unless reasons can be provided, which are sufficient for the Department to accept that this is not a feasible option, in which case importation from an off-Island source may be considered providing appropriate health certification can be provided.

**Approved by Minister for DEFA: April 2015**

**Due for Review: March 2025**

**Contact for Further Information:**

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