

If you have a koi pond with at least a male and female that are 8 inches long you most likely had some spawning. While the dictionary definition of spawn is the mass of eggs deposited by aquatic animals such as fish, I think Todd McFarlane was more on track naming his comic book crime fighter reincarnated from hell as Spawn.

Spawning usually occurs in the spring when water temperatures rise to 63 to 68 degrees. It begins in the morning, lasting 4 to 6 hours and generally goes unnoticed by the pond owner. If you do happen to catch the spawning it is wise to observe the fish periodically to check for injuries.

As the spawning begins the males chase the females using their snouts to bump her into the sides of the pond forcing her to release her eggs. Multiple males will sandwich the female between them in a coordinated effort to get the eggs to release. Once they are released, all the males then release their spermatozoa all over the surrounding area. At our house we call this the “drive by shooting”. The releasing and fertilizing of the eggs causes such turbulence the eggs are sent flying, sticking to anything and everything it touches.

When the spawning is finished your pond is stirred up, cloudy, has an unusual smell, and tapioca looking fish eggs everywhere. The fish will eat some of them but if you have large fish the number of eggs spawned is unbelievable. After the fish have settled down it is important to perform up to a 50% water change depending on the situation. For the next few days you will want to pay special attention to your skimmers and filters to be sure they stay clean.

We had quite a spawn this year. Our fish have gotten large and we were not as prepared as we should have been. We experienced 5 full days of spawning and in spite of our efforts we couldn't keep up. There were eggs everywhere. Also, we did not put in any type of spawning mat or brushes. This can be a commercially available spawning mat from an aquatic store, or a new nonchemical treated mop head. Adding these to your pond helps cut down on injuries by providing a soft surface on which to lay their eggs. Next year I'm putting in spawning mats just to assist in the egg removal process. My females laid so many eggs I experienced water quality problems. Professional estimates establish koi can lay 45,000 eggs per pound of fish, or in my case 5 females equal 2,250,000 eggs. After several days of intense work, I did manage to remove them and correct the water quality problem. I was completely unprepared this year but have learned to not let it get out of hand in the future.

Email me with questions. Dale@DWhaley.com. The First Coast Koi Club annual pond tour June 5th 9am until 4pm. Check the website for more details.
www.firstcoastkoiclub.com