

Recommendations for Feeding Fish Over Extended Breaks

These suggestions are from Trout in the Classroom (TIC) programs within Trout Unlimited.

Trout Unlimited Mid-Atlantic TIC Resource Guide, Chapter 8. A link to this Resource Guide with other recommendations can be found on the AZ TIC web site (www.aztic.org) under “Teacher Tools”.

Feeding Guidelines During Extended Breaks and Vacations

Ideally, during vacation periods, someone should check the tank, conduct water changes and feed the trout on a regular basis. However, this is not always possible. The following guidelines have been designed for those times when daily feeding is not possible.

An automatic feeder is not recommended. If enlisting the assistance of security and maintenance staff to feed the fish on weekends and holidays, it is advisable to place a feeding chart near the tank for them to record when and how much the fish have been fed.

The importance of not overfeeding the trout should be made clear to everyone feeding the fish during vacation periods. If fish are fed during mid-length or long vacation periods, water changes and gravel cleaning to remove fish waste may also be required.

Persons providing assistance should be instructed how to perform these procedures.

- 1. Short Vacations (3 or 4 day weekends)** On the day before a short vacation, feed less; change water as necessary. Three days without additional food is not a threat to fish health.
- 2. Mid-length Vacations (7 to 10 days)** Trout can survive a 10-day vacation without food or water changes.
 - a. On the days leading up to the vacation, feed a little less to minimize ammonia buildup during the holiday.
 - b. If indicated, change as much as ten gallons of water on the day before leaving. For such a large water change, if possible, do a 5 gallon change in the morning and another 5-gallon change in the afternoon. Watch the water temperature as you do this. If necessary, use your bottles of frozen de-chlorinated water to keep the tank temperature below 57° F until the chiller cools the tank to its normal 52°F. Also be sure to add Special Blend and Nite-Out II.
- 3. Long Vacations (11+ days)**
 - a. Same preparation as for a mid-length vacation. Plan to have someone feed the fish halfway through the vacation, if possible, with the same amount of food provided the day just before the vacation.
 - b. Bear in mind that feeding the fish will result in the need to remove fish waste by siphoning the gravel and replacing de-chlorinated water removed from the tank during that process.
 - c. Don't worry if no one can come to feed the fish. Trout can survive lean times. They are more at risk from poor water quality than starvation.

Trout Unlimited's Pennsylvania TIC Resource Guide, Chapter 7, pages 47 - 48. A link to this Resource Guide with other recommendations can be found on the AZ TIC web site (www.aztic.org) under "Teacher Tools".

1. Vacation/holiday preparation

Your trout will survive over a 2 - 4 day weekend without any food, but during vacations it is best for someone to check on the aquarium to make sure the equipment is working.

2. Preparing for short vacations (3 - 4 day weekends)

- a. Feed in the morning Friday. Remove any excess food from the bottom of the aquarium using a turkey baster. Use a net to collect excess food on the surface. This will decrease potential ammonia spikes while you are gone. If you are concerned you may want to skip feeding all together.
- b. Conduct a partial water change (20 - 25%).

3. Preparing for mid-length vacations (7 - 10 days)

- a. Trout are wild animals that can survive leaner times; however, you should feed at least twice during a long vacation. It is natural to experience some cannibalism, which could lead into a carrying capacity lesson or survival of the fittest lesson.
- b. Continue with the normal feeding cycle in the days leading up to vacation.
- c. Conduct a partial water change (20 - 25%) prior to leaving.

4. Preparing for long vacations (11+ days)

- a. Same preparation as above.
- b. Come in at least twice, if possible, leaving only 3 - 4 days between visits.

Reminders:

ALWAYS dechlorinate tap water before adding it to your tank as part of any water change or topping off.

Use Nova Aqua Plus at a rate of 5ml/10 gallons tap water. The water will be instantly dechlorinated, no waiting time required.