



TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM

HANDBOOK



WHAT IS TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM?

What Is Trout In The Classroom?	3	Hatching	10
Program Contacts	3	Trout Tank And Care	11
How To Get Involved	3	Alevin (Sac Fry) Stage - One to Three Weeks	11
Initial Startup.....	3	Swim-Up Stage - One Week Or Less	11
Program Timeline	4	Fry Stage - Six to Eight Weeks.....	11
Program Information	5	Parr Stage - (The Rest Of The Time).....	12
Equipment	6	Crisis Notes	12
Ordering From That Pet Place	6	General Notes	13
Equipment Setup	7	Resources.....	13
Prep & Set Up Your Gravel (Optional).....	7	Trout Release And Disposal	13
Set Up Your Filter	7	Trout Releasing/Stocking	13
Set Up Your Air Stone And Air Pump	8	Trout Euthanasia And Disposal	14
Assemble Your Egg Baskets.....	8	Chapter 33 Permit.....	14
Fill Your Tank With Water.....	8	End Of Year Clean-Up	14
Check For Any Mistakes, Plug Everything In	8	Frequently Asked Questions	14
Start Pre-Cycling Your Tank	9	Lesson Plans And Resources	14
Prepare For Your Egg Delivery	9		
Egg Maintenance	10		



WHAT IS TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM?

Trout in the Classroom (TIC) introduces students to the concepts of ecology, population biology, water quality, fish anatomy and conservation. During a TIC program, teachers and students raise trout from eggs to fingerling in their classrooms. Trout Unlimited and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department work with educators to provide them with trout eggs, curriculum, and support. The curriculum is designed to meet Wyoming science education standards and provide students STEM experience. TIC is ideal for students in 5th to 8th grade.

During this program, Wyoming students will:

- Monitor tank water quality and learn about water systems
- Learn about fish biology and physiology
- Grow an appreciation for aquatic habitats and learn about ecosystems
- Develop conservation ethics

Each teacher can tailor the program to fit their curriculum needs. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Trout Unlimited provide a set of interdisciplinary lesson plans that can be used to fit a variety of learning standards and learning styles.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

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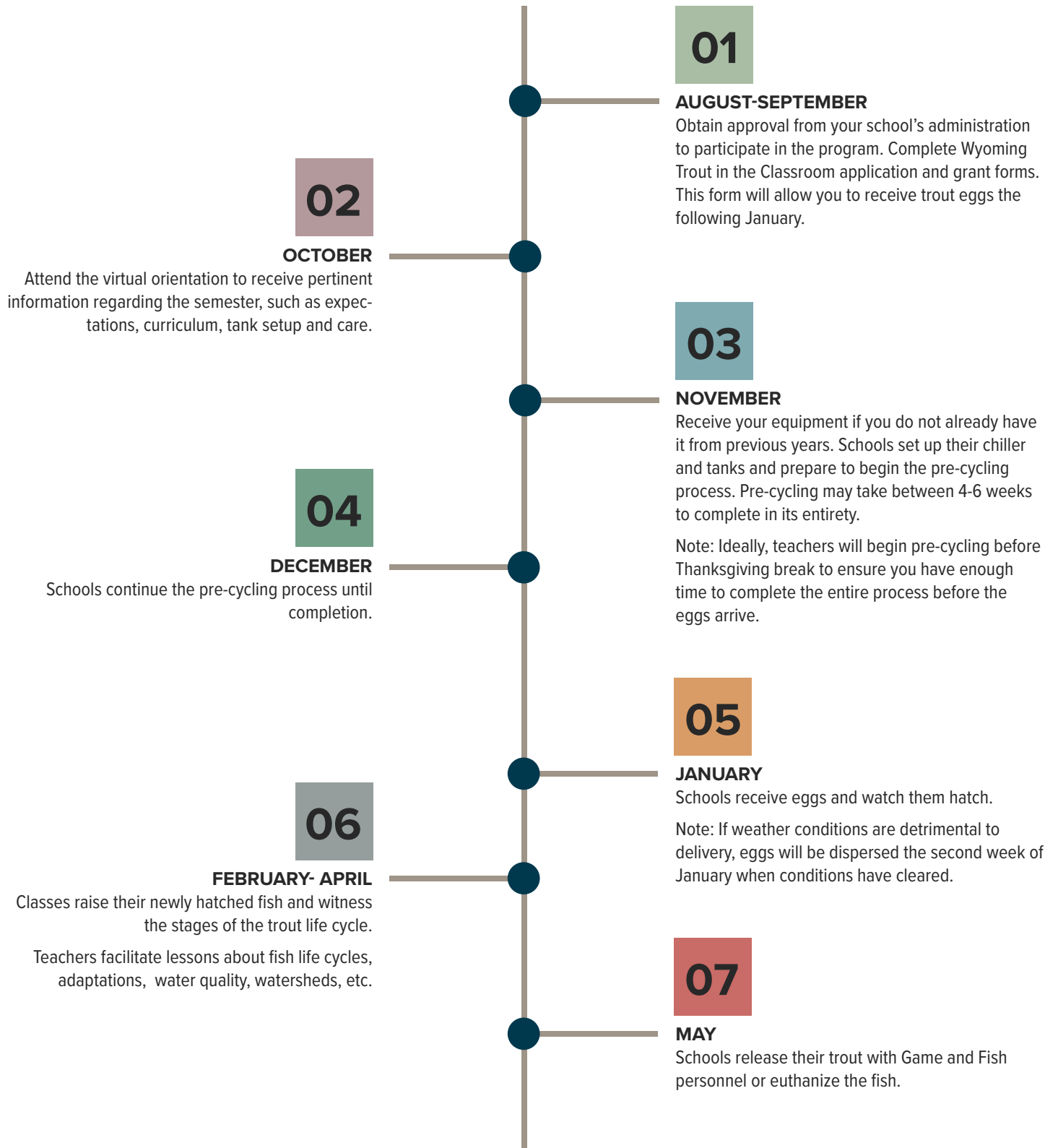
wyo_hiss@gmail.com

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

First-year setup procedure

1. Seek approval from your school administration.
2. Complete the TIC application and grant form.
3. Game and Fish will confirm admittance into the program and confirm the egg distribution plan with schools.
4. Order your equipment.
5. Attend the virtual TIC teacher orientation.
6. Review curriculum.
7. Receive equipment.
8. Receive eggs.
9. Start raising trout in your classroom!

PROGRAM TIMELINE



PROGRAM INFORMATION



The set-up timeline can be accessed here:

www.troutintheclassroom.org/technical-information/start-a-program/timeline/

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department supplies the eggs and fish feed to the participating TIC classrooms. Eggs for Wyoming TIC will come from Game and Fish's Dubois Hatchery.

Teachers complete both the program and grant application.

Game and Fish Education team reviews requests and confirms with teachers.

Game and Fish and TU work with teachers to acquire the appropriate equipment to complete the program and confirm the day they will receive eggs.

Teachers pick up eggs from regional offices, or Trout Unlimited volunteers distribute eggs from regional offices to schools. This will be coordinated with teachers.

The Game and Fish Education Team confirms with the school that they have received their eggs and that their tank is set up.



EQUIPMENT

Most of the equipment you will be using can be found at <https://www.thatpetplace.com/trout-in-the-classroom>.

The remaining pieces of equipment can be found at local hardware stores, local pet stores or online. Below you will find a chart telling you which items will be purchased from That Pet Place and which items will be found from other sources. The chart will also indicate which items you will need to replace annually. You will find the item numbers from equipment pieces found at That Pet Place, just in case you need to replace individual items.

Ordering from That Pet Place

When ordering from That Pet Place, you will purchase either Kit #1 or Kit #3. The difference in the kit is the filter. In Kit #1, the filter that comes with it sits on the floor. In Kit #3, the filter that comes with it goes on the back of the tank. It really comes down to the preference of the teacher and what you want your setup to be like.

On the website for That Pet Place, you will find pricing for Kit #1 and #3, in addition to a replacement kit and variations of Kit #1 and #3. You will also find shipping information.

PURCHASED FROM THATPETPLACE.COM				
EQUIPMENT	QUANTITY	ITEM NUMBER	FIRST YEAR	ANNUALLY
Aqua Euro USA ¼ hp Chiller	1	253983	✓	
Fluval 406 Canister Filter	1	256342	✓	
AquaClear 110 Power Filter		215378	✓	
Whisper 60 Air Pump	1	205754	✓	
10" Aqua Mist Add-a-Stone	1	212520	✓	✓
8' Flexible Airline Tubing ST-8	1	212445	✓	
Fusion Check Valve 1 pk.	1	240195	✓	✓
Net Breeder	1	204233	✓	
Battery Operated Digital Thermometer	1	209362	✓	
8" Net w/ Long Handle	1	212526	✓	
Micro-Lift Special Blend 16 oz.	2	243424	✓	✓
Nite-Out II 16 oz.	2	243555	✓	✓
NovAqua Plus Water Conditioner 16 oz.	1	214299	✓	✓
Mag Drive Water Pump 700 GPH	1	206397	✓	
¾" Clear Flexible Tubing	15	204177	✓	
Reducing Bushing MPT x FPT - .75in. X .75in.	1	199448	✓	
Female Insert Adapter FPT x Insert - .75 in. X .75 in.	1	278257	✓	
Stainless Steel Hose Clamp ½" to 1"	5	241595	✓	

PURCHASED FROM THATPETPLACE.COM				
EQUIPMENT	QUANTITY	ITEM NUMBER	FIRST YEAR	ANNUALLY
Freshwater Master Test Kit	1	199591	✓	✓
GH & KH Hardness Test Kit for FW	1	199678	✓	✓
Lee's Squeeze Bulb Ultra Gravel Vac. With on/off Valve	1	253080	✓	
Shallow Creek Pebbles 5 lb.	2	268724	✓	
Eshopps Return Jet for Output of Chiller Water	1	250869	✓	
Teflon Tape	1	199328	✓	
Chemi-Pure 5 oz. Filter Media (carbon)	2	196393	✓	✓

Ordering from other sources

See the list below.

ITEMS PURCHASED FROM OTHER SOURCES FOR THE FIRST YEAR	
EQUIPMENT	QUANTITY
55 Gallon Tank and Stand	1
Foam Board (for insulation covering all sides)	
Turkey Baster (to remove dead eggs or waste)	
Battery Operated Aerator (Transportation of fish)	
Clean Ice Packs (Chiller malfunction and transportation)	
Siphon Water Pump (water changes)	2
Measuring Spoon Set (¼ tsp to feed fish)	
Plastic Eye Dropper (measuring)	



EQUIPMENT SETUP



Follow video instructions by scanning the QR code or using the link: bit.ly/TIC-handbookresources

Let's begin

Unpack all materials and compare them to shipping lists. Ensure that nothing is missing or broken. Check plastic pieces, particularly the filter components, for cracks.

Place the tank away from heat, excessive light, and activity. If next to a window, ensure that the shade is down until the fry swim around or there is some protection around the tank. Do not put the tank next to an active radiator. Because a filled tank will be top-heavy, place it away from areas where students might accidentally bump into it. Clean out any dirt inside the tank with a wet paper towel. Do not use soap or any cleaning chemicals; residue from these compounds can persist in the aquarium and harm your trout.

Locate the electrical outlet and plug the power strip into it. The outlet should be close enough to the tank that all electric devices can reach it. Ideally, it should be right behind or underneath the tank. Turn the power strip off.

Insulation is crucial to maintaining a stable environment for your trout and minimizing wear on your chiller.

Set up your chiller

Place the chiller to the side of or below the tank, with the front facing out. There should be at least 4 inches of space on every side of the chiller for proper airflow. Open the plastic bag with chiller parts and remove two water nozzles for a flow-through chiller. Screw these in place on the chiller, and tighten them by hand. You may carefully tighten these further with pliers, but be mindful of the limitations of the plastic.

Measure the length of chiller tubing that will reach from the chiller to the bottom of the tank without stress or kinks. Be generous with length because a tube can always be shorter but not longer. Cut this length of tubing and slide one end over the chiller input nozzle. Measure a similar tubing length for the chiller's output nozzle and cut this piece. Attach this piece of tubing by sliding it over the chiller output nozzle. Tight tubing can be more flexible by dipping it in hot water. You may need to remove the nozzle, too. Depending on the chiller design, there may not be any specific input or output side.

Next, slide the metal clamp over the tube to the nozzle on the chiller. Screw the clamp in place over the end of the tube so that the outer edge of the clamp and the tube are matched. The clamp should be tight but not forced.

Remove the pump from its box and locate the plastic adapter nozzle for the pump. Screw this nozzle in place, and slide the other end of the input chiller tube over the nozzle on the pump. This connection does not need a clamp. Install the pump filter if one is included but not attached. Place the pump inside the tank and put the pump power cord near the power strip.

Prep & set up your gravel (Optional)

Rinse your pea-size gravel two or three times to remove all dust. Then, layer it 1"—2" thick on the bottom of the aquarium. If you prefer to keep the gravel away from the pump and airstone, you can cover just part of the bottom. Please note that adding gravel to your tank is purely for aesthetics and is not necessary for success.

Set up your filter

Unpack and assemble the filter according to the included directions. Place it on the back side of the tank if it is a hanging filter. Ensure the filter intake tube is as close to the tank bottom as possible. Cover the intake for your filter with some sort of mesh or net that will keep the fry from getting sucked into your filter (plastic net bags and pantyhose are popular materials for this). Secure the mesh with an aquarium-safe method, such as a rubber band. Canister filters can be placed next to or underneath the tank and hooked in line with a flow-through chiller. Place the filter power cord near the power strip.

Set up your air stone and air pump

Unpack the airstone, air pump, and airstone tube. Attach one end of the airstone tube to the airstone and the other to the air pump. Place the air pump on the ground near the power strip. The air pump's rubber feet should be on the ground to prevent excessive noise. Place the airstone in the tank, away from the filter intake tube. You may choose to use a check valve to prevent the backflow of water in the airstone tube. To do this, cut the air tubing and use the check valve to connect the two pieces. Air should push the flap and compress the spring inside the valve.

Assemble your egg baskets

Assemble the hatching basket by stretching the net over the outside of the plastic frame or carefully securing the net to the inside of the frame. Bend the metal clips to hang the basket on the tank wall. If you use a Vibert box instead, it will be placed on the tank's floor.

Fill your tank with water

Fill the tank with tap water using any clean container or tubing. The water level should be no more than 2 inches from the top of the tank but not so close that it might spill. Use a cup to fill the filter chamber with water until it overflows into the tank.

Check for any mistakes, plug everything in

Plug in all electrical cords using the power strip, but keep the power off. Once everything is plugged in, stand back from the tank to double-check all connections and ensure that everything is ready for operation. The output tube should be secure; a student can hold this tube in place. Have some paper towels on hand in the event of a leak.

Turn on the power strip and check for leaks on the chiller. The bubbler should be creating a large volume of small bubbles. The chiller may beep and is now warming up. Remove the output hose from the water carefully to ensure good water flow. The filter should become much quieter after all the air is pushed out of the system.

Adjust the chiller temperature to the appropriate setting. You may have to wait a few minutes before the chiller begins operating fully. You may hear the chiller fan or compressor operating in a few minutes. You must allow any chlorine in your tap water to dissipate for the next 48 hours.

Now that you know everything is set up correctly, turn off your chiller, allow your water to get to room temperature, and begin the pre-cycling process.



Start pre-cycling your tank

National TIC has done its best to provide a standard protocol for pre-cycling; however, each tank setup is ultimately unique. Many variables cannot be controlled, such as your classroom temperature, water quality, sources of bacteria, etc. For the protocol they provided below to be successful, water quality monitoring is critical, and you may (likely will) need to adjust the protocol based on those readings.

Day 1 - Test the water chemistry of your tank (pH, ammonia, nitrites, nitrates and KH) and record the values. It is unlikely that you will have any readings for ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate at this point but it is nonetheless important to check. High readings could indicate a problem with your water source that needs to be addressed before moving forward. Then, add the appropriate amount of Dr. Tim's Ammonium Chloride Solution to the tank based on tank volume. After 10 minutes measure and record the ammonia level in the tank to make sure the right amount was added. The goal is to achieve an ammonia level between 1.0-2.0 ppm. Add 25 ml of NiteOut II bacteria solution to the tank every other day. Your initial KH reading should be 150 ppm. Add baking soda if the reading is more than 20 ppm below this figure. A KH reading between 100-150 ppm should be maintained during the time eggs and fish are in the tank. (One tsp/55 gallons of water will raise the KH 17.9 ppm). If the KH reading is below 100 ppm add 1 tsp (teaspoon) of baking soda every other day until the KH reading is above 120 ppm. Don't attempt to increase the KH to the desired reading at one time.

Day 2 - Measure ammonia, nitrite and pH readings (and KH if you have been adding baking soda). Record readings.

Day 3 - If ammonia and nitrite readings are below 1 ppm, add half the amount of ammonium chloride solution as that on Day 1. If readings are above 1 ppm, do nothing. Record readings.

Day 4 and 5 - Measure ammonia, nitrite and pH readings (and KH if you have been adding baking soda). Record readings.

Day 6 - Measure ammonia, nitrite and pH readings (and KH if you have been adding baking soda). Record readings.

After 7 or 8 days, Continue the pre-cycling process. Watch the instructional videos linked on page 7.

Until fish arrive - You need to feed the bacteria you've now established in your tank. Add a small pinch of fish food every other day and once a week measure and record pH, KH, ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate. When you add fish food, and the ammonia and nitrite stay below ~1 ppm, you know you have a cycled fish tank ready for fish! Along with the ammonium chloride, you have been provided with pellets of fish food. If you crush 1 to 2 of these pellets in a mortar and pestle that should provide the pinch of food. Lacking a mortar and pestle you can use the back of a metal spoon and crush the pellets against the side of a small bowl.

A pre-cycled tank should not require the addition of Special Blend Bacteria.

Do not let the ammonia or nitrite concentration rise above 5 ppm. If either concentration rises above 5 ppm, make water changes to lower the concentration.

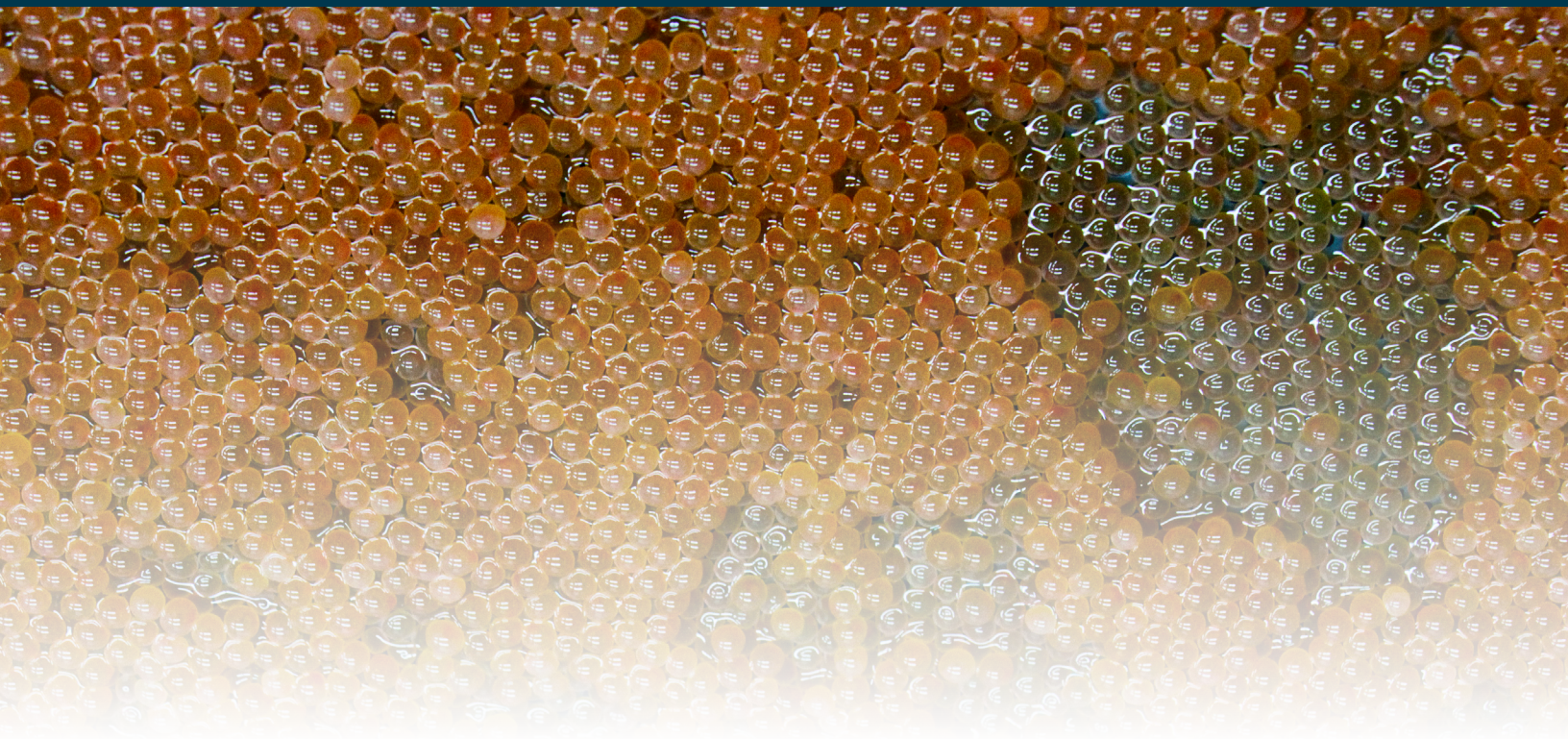
Do not let the pH drop below 7.0. If it does, do a partial water change to bring the pH back up. A pH value that is declining is often an indication of a KH level that is too low. Add baking soda if needed.

Prepare for your egg delivery

5 days before egg delivery - Turn on the chiller, setting the temperature to 58 degrees. Test the water for pH, ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, carbonate hardness (KH) and general hardness (GH). The pH of the tank should be stable within a range of 7.0 – 7.6 for optimum reproduction of the bacteria. If the pH of your tap water falls outside this range your fish will still do well as long as you keep the pH stable. Fluctuations in pH level can cause fish mortality. Make sure the KH (carbonate hardness) of your tank's water is 150 or more. Refer to Chapter 7 for guidance regarding KH and to Appendix F for instructions for using baking soda to correct low KH readings.

24 hours before egg delivery - Using the digital thermometer, check to see that the water temperature is at the desired level; 58 degrees F. Turn on the air pump/air stone. Check the breeder basket. Make sure that water flowing from the filter and bubbles flowing from the aerator will not disturb the resting eggs. If necessary, redirect flows or reposition the tray.

Egg delivery day - Once you receive or pick up your eggs from WY TIC identified locations, place your eggs within the egg basket inside your tank. The Game and Fish Dubois hatchery will supply written instructions for egg care. Familiarize yourself with the information provided.



EGG MAINTENANCE

Eyed eggs are identifiable by their characteristic dark spots—each trout’s two eyes. Movement during egg delivery can weaken the outer layer of the shell and cause weak spots or broken areas. These spots are vulnerable to fungal infection. Remove all eggs with white spots.

After receiving the eggs and returning them to the classroom, temper them to a temperature close to what the classroom setup will have. Temperature differences of 2-3 degrees Fahrenheit are acceptable.

Keep the eggs and freshly hatched fry in a dark environment as much as possible. As the fish swim up for food, more light exposure is acceptable.

White spots are a fungus that spreads really fast. If possible, pick out spotted eggs twice a day—especially check last thing on Friday afternoon before leaving for the weekend. The outer shell must remain translucent; eggs with any opaque spots (or fully opaque) will not develop.

Hatching

Most trout will hatch within 2-3 days of first egg hatching.

Some eggs will not hatch properly, and some alevin may not fully emerge from the egg. Remove any leftover eggs (or isolate them—these likely will not hatch).

Leftover shells float to the top of the tank or in the basket, and fish enzymes break down these shells and create foam—this is normal.

Scrub the sides of the tank with an aquarium sponge to loosen this foam.

During this alevin phase, you may feel a jelly-like fungal growth around the inside tank surfaces and hatching basket. If you find this, wipe or scrape the surfaces with a sponge to send it through the sterilization and filtration system.

When the eggs hatch, alevin will lie on their sides, with their egg sacs still attached. Alevin receive nutrients from this sac.

Soon, they will “right” themselves but remain low in the basket. As the egg sac is consumed, the alevin begin to rise. Please see Trout Feeding for instructions on when to begin, the quantity, and the frequency of feeding.

Eventually, they will swim up over the basket edge into the larger area of the tank.





TROUT TANK AND CARE

Alevin (sac fry) Stage - One to three weeks

The length of time at this stage depends on the water temperature; warmer water causes fry to develop faster. Use a digital thermometer daily to ensure the in-tank temperature is 50-53 degrees. Chiller consoles are notoriously inaccurate.

Look for your odd trout and heart development, etc. Some alevin don't survive, and this is perfectly normal.

Swim-up Stage - One week or less

As yolk sacs disappear, some trout will start swimming around looking for food. When you see the first trout swim up in the hatching basket or out of hatching basket, start feeding. We usually wait for 60% or more swim-up behavior before feeding starts.

This is when you can remove the darkening cover from your tank – at this point, UV light will not hurt the fish.

Feed trout by spreading a minuscule amount of food (size 0) near any swimming trout. Over-feeding will cause fish health and water quality issues.

Now is an excellent time to “boost” your tank’s nitrifying bacteria with a shot of Special Blend and Nite Out II, which can be added once a week.

Now is also the moment to add mesh or pantyhose around your filter intake, to make sure that your fry don't get sucked into your filter.

Once all fry are swimming up and have been eating, unhook the basket and drop it to the bottom of the tank. Strong, adventurous fish will swim out and timid, weaker fish will hide for a few more days until they are stronger.

Some fry don't survive or learn to feed properly for various reasons. This is perfectly normal.

Fry Stage - Six to eight weeks

Feeding may vary. Try to ensure all of the fish are eating. This may require feeding on two separate sides of the tank. In general, feed small pinches 2-3 times per day.

Every couple of days, carefully remove the mesh or pantyhose from your filter intake and shake out any debris collected (and let it get sucked up into the filter). Doing this will keep your filter motor from working too hard and minimize gunk.

Some trout never learn to feed and will die. Non-feeding fish are called “pinheads”—big heads, little bodies. Remove these trout as they will not develop.

Every TIC classroom sees this mortality spike with the pinheads—it is very normal.

Remove any leftover food collected in one area 5-10 minutes later.

A turkey baster is a great way to vacuum up extra food and waste. Continued leftovers mean you are overfeeding, which can cause problems with ammonia levels.



Parr Stage - The rest of the time

Look for parr marks on the trout.

Small water changes with a siphon can happen daily, with a 20% change at the end of each week.

Clean the tank 15 minutes after feeding.

Always keep track of your water chemistry—water testing can help you with this.

- If any levels seem high, do a big water change (20% or more).

Be careful to watch the temperature during water changes, and don't let the tank temperature fluctuate more than 5 degrees.

In an emergency, clean water is more critical than temperature stability.

Cannibalism can occur—the big fish do eat the little fish. If cannibalism is becoming an issue, then feed more often to assuage hunger.

Be sure to clean more often and change water if you feed more often.

What should you do if you have a major die-off?

Remove healthy fish first and put them in a reserve water bucket (with treated water), no matter its temperature and use a battery-operated aerator or tank's airstone in the bucket.

- You may also add one small, clean ice pack to the bucket.

Remove as much water from the tank as possible (roughly 80%).

Leave pump and filter intake covered.

Clean the tank with a clean scrub sponge, removing as much crud as possible and suck up gunk with a turkey baster.

Refill the tank with water and treat it with water conditioners (Stress Coat, Special Blend, Nite Out II, Tap Safe, etc.)

Cool the water with ice or freeze packs.

Replace at least one charcoal filter.

Place the fish back in the tank.

The next day, add more Special Blend, Nite Out II and/or Stress Coat.



CRISIS NOTES

READ BEFORE TROUT TRAGEDY OCCURS

When adding new water, treat all the water with water conditioners, such as Amquel and Novaqua.

Change the water if:

- All fish are not moving and are gathered at the bottom of the tank.
- All fish are lethargic.
- Your fish are unresponsive to food.

During the first few weeks, initial ammonia spikes from overfeeding are likely. Water changes and some water conditioners are the only solution.

It is also good to “boost” your tank with Special Blend and Nite out II as often as once a week.

If you change your filter media, only change one section at a time, allowing the bacteria from the remaining section to colonize the new media. Do not change the ceramic media.

GENERAL NOTES

Once your trout have started eating, siphon-vacuum your tank every 2-3 weeks. Be sure to carefully remove the detritus that accumulates at the bottom of your tank.

In six months, fry will be ready to release! Find out from your TIC coordinator how to get the appropriate permit.

Resources

[Feeding Guidelines](#)

[Vacation Planning](#)

[Ammonia and Trout](#)

[Equipment Maintenance](#)

[Nitrogen Cycle](#)

[Dissolved Oxygen](#)

[Water Hardness](#)

[Troubleshooting FAQ](#)

TROUT RELEASE AND DISPOSAL

Trout Releasing/Stocking

To release your fish, you must coordinate with the Game and Fish Education team.

During the stocking, a Game and Fish employee must supervise the release. Trout can only be released in the following preapproved locations:

Jackson

- None

Casper

- Yesness Pond or Brian Stock Trail Pond (Casper)
- Keith Rider Pond (Douglas)

Cody

- Homesteader Park Pond (Powell)
- New Cody Reservoir (Cody)
- South Worland Pond (Worland)
- Waterplant Pond (Basin)
- Pond 5 (Lovell)

Green River

- Rock Springs Pond or Fairgrounds Pond 2 (Rock Springs)
- Diamondville Pond (Diamondville/Kemmerer) (Note: There is no restroom at this location.)
- Sweetwater Kids Pond (Jamestown/Green River)

Lander

- Pete's Pond (Dubois)
- Luckey Pond (Lander)
- Big Bend Ponds (Riverton)

Laramie/Cheyenne

- Sloans Lake (Cheyenne)
- Gelatt Lake (Laramie)
- Saratoga Lake (Platte Valley)

Pinedale

- Pinedale Kids Pond (Pinedale)
- Pinedale Town Pond (Pinedale)
- Marbleton Town Pond (Marbleton/Big Piney/Largabarge)

Sheridan

- Kleenburn Ponds (Sheridan)
- Ranchester City Pond (Sheridan)
- Buffalo Wetlands Pond (Buffalo)
- Gillette Fishing Lake (Gillette)
- Black Elk Pond (Newcastle)
- Sundance Fairgrounds Pond (Sundance)
- Panther Pond (Wright)

Once a request is approved, you will receive release day preparation instructions.

Trout Euthanasia and Disposal

- Please contact WY TIC's state coordinator, Frances Schaetz, at frances.schaetz@wyo.gov for guidelines.

Chapter 33 Permit

Trout in the Classroom operates under a Chapter 33 Scientific Research, Educational or Special Purpose permit from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. In order to possess live wildlife of any kind (in this case trout) a person must hold such a permit. The Trout in the Classroom permit requires that eggs and fish are fully contained within the aquaria associated with the application and only removed when dead or on the day of transport for the approved release with the Game and Fish. Fish or eggs cannot be moved from one aquarium to another (even if it is to another Trout in the Classroom aquaria). On the day of release, fish must be transported under the direction of the applicant teacher and may only be released on the approved date and location under the direction of a Wyoming Game and Fish Department employee. Applicant teachers are responsible for adherence to all aspects of the Chapter 33 Permit.

END OF YEAR CLEAN-UP



For end-of-year clean-up, scan the QR code or use the link:

www.troutintheclassroom.org/technical-information/equipment/end-of-year-clean-up/

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Please see frequently asked questions [here](#). To join the TIC teacher community, please [click here](#).

LESSON PLANS AND RESOURCES



For lesson plans and resources, scan the QR code or use the link: bit.ly/TIC-handbookresources