



# Tips for Handling Live Aquatic Bait

## What's the Big Deal about Live Aquatic Bait?

Live aquatic bait, such as minnows, crayfish, leeches, and mud puppies, can ruin fishing and introduce diseases to the fish already in the lake. Mussels and their microscopic larvae or plants can be transported in water held in the bait buckets or live wells. Once the boat is transported to another body of water, the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) can be deposited into the new water. Anglers and boaters must take care not to move plants, animals, or water to a new lake or stream.



## What Do the Regulations Say about Live Aquatic Bait?

Colorado Division of Wildlife and Colorado State Parks ANS regulations require that **all live aquatic bait must be purchased from an authorized Colorado bait dealer** and must be accompanied by a **dated receipt**. The receipt is valid for ANS inspections for **seven days**.



- Live fish are only allowed for use as bait on the East Slope below 7,000 feet and at Navajo Reservoir.
  - In those areas, the transportation of live fish as bait is prohibited between waters unless it was purchased from a Colorado bait dealer, as described above.
- Fish harvested in the wild for use as bait can only be used in the water in which it was caught and can no longer be transported and stored for later use.

- The transportation of live crayfish is prohibited on the west slope and from Sanchez Reservoir.
- It is unlawful to transport live bait across state lines without an import permit.

## What Happens to Live Aquatic Bait During ANS Inspections?

Depending on the location and type of bait, the inspection or treatment will vary.



If you have bait in a container or in a well with standing water, you will be allowed to proceed and launch with the bait as is if:

- Your receipt is from a Colorado bait dealer **and**
- The receipt is dated no more than seven days **and**
- Matches up with the bait in question.

If the receipt is older than seven days, the inspector will perform a bait treatment to remove the threat of ANS in the bait-water. You will be asked to **remove** the bait from the vessels live well or container and **place it into a holding container**. The live well or container must be drained and decontaminated using standard decontamination procedures (hot water rinse) before the bait is returned. The container or well water will be replaced with water from a sealed container or non-chlorinated source.

If you **DO NOT** have a receipt the live aquatic bait will not be permitted for use and will have to be properly disposed of in the trash. However, if the bait is not fish and was harvested within ½ mile of the reservoir from man-made ditches or canals, the inspector will perform a bait treatment as described above. The exception to this is bait harvested within Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero, or Prowers counties, which can be transported and used only within those five counties.

**Out of state bait is not permitted for use.**

## What is Considered Live Aquatic Bait?

Anything that needs to be kept in water to stay alive is considered live aquatic bait. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Minnows
- Crayfish, crawdads, crawfish
- Frogs
- Water dogs, mud puppies, salamanders

Anything that does not need to be kept in water is **not live aquatic bait**. Examples include:

- Worms
- Grasshoppers
- Grubs
- Crickets



## How Do I Properly Dispose of Unused Live Aquatic Bait?

Dispose of unused live aquatic bait in the trash. **Do not release in the water!**

## What Happens if I Release Live Aquatic Bait or Plants?

Because ANS are not native to Colorado habitats, they have no natural competitors and predators. Without these checks and balances, introducing non-native plants or animals into Colorado lakes and streams can be detrimental to the entire habitat. Non-native frogs and toads eat and out-compete native species and can be poisonous to raccoons and foxes. Plants can out-compete native species and eliminate food sources for native and sport fish. Predators that eat fish, such as eagles and other birds, may also be harmed. Zebra mussels smother crayfish and native animals. They compete with them for food by removing plankton that young fish and other animals need to survive.

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RUSTY CRAYFISH PHOTO © PHIL MYERS,  
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QUAGGA AND ZEBRA MUSSELS PHOTO  
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## Tips for Speedy Inspections

We are continually working on ways to facilitate the inspection process for our visitors, and we recommend these options:

- **Do not buy live aquatic bait over the internet;** only buy from authorized Colorado bait dealers. While you can order just about anything from the internet and it may seem convenient, consider what could happen to your boating, sport fish, native frogs, snakes, and other animals if you introduce a new competitor or a potential disease carrier to your lake!
- Keep your receipt and check that it has been dated.
- Keep your bait in the container from the dealer.
- Use bait within seven days of purchase.
- Only take bait on the boat you plan to use that day.
- Remove the heads of crayfish before transporting.

## You Can Make a Difference!

You can help stop the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) in Colorado and the West! Before entering and when leaving any waters always:

**Clean:** Remove all plants, animals and mud. Thoroughly wash everything: boats, trailers, vehicle hitches and motors. Aquatic plant fragments and animals can hide in mud and survive many days out of water. Be sure to clean all fishing equipment including waders and boots.

**Drain:** Completely drain every space or item that could hold water, including live wells, bait containers, ballast and bilge tanks, and engine cooling systems. Remove plugs, drop motor, and use sponges and/or towels to absorb all water from bilges, live wells, ballast tanks, and motors.

**Dry:** Allow sufficient time for boats and equipment to dry completely before launching in other waters.

**Dispose:** Properly dispose unused live bait into trash containers, not into the water. Properly dispose of aquarium or classroom animals or plants, do not place them in any body of water or natural setting.

For more information call the Colorado Division of Wildlife at (303) 291-7295 or Colorado State Parks at (303) 866-3437.

**Please Clean, Drain, and Dry your boat and gear to keep boating open in Colorado.**



**STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™**

