What Is the Best Food to Feed Koi?

Koi Carp · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/best-food-for-koi/

What is the best food to feed koi—and how do you know if you're getting it right?

If you've ever stood in front of shelves full of koi food wondering why one bag costs £30 and another £120, you're not alone. And if your pond struggles with waste, algae, or constant maintenance, your food choice could be a big part of the problem.

The truth is, there isn't one single "best" koi food.

In this guide, you'll learn how to choose the right food for your pond, your fish, and your goals—whether that's reducing waste, improving water quality, or getting the best growth and colour from your koi.



The Short Answer: The Best Koi Food Depends on Your Goals

There is no single best food for koi—only the best food for your specific pond setup and priorities.

The right choice depends on:

- The quality of your koi
- Your pond size and filtration
- Your goals (growth, colour, low maintenance, cost control)

What Makes a Good Koi Food?

Not all koi food is created equal. The difference between a good and bad food isn't just price—it's how well your fish can actually use it.

The best koi foods focus on digestibility, not just ingredients on a label.

Here's what really matters:

1. Digestible Protein (Not Just High Protein)

Many foods advertise "high protein," but that can be misleading.

What matters is how much of that protein your koi can actually digest.

- Low-quality protein → passes through as waste
- High-quality protein → supports growth and health

---

2. Balanced Nutrition

Koi need the right balance of:

- Protein
- Carbohydrates
- Fats

If that balance is off, digestion suffers—and waste increases.

---

3. Ingredient Quality

Higher-quality foods use better raw ingredients that are easier for koi to process.

This leads to:

- Better nutrient absorption
- Less waste in your pond

---

4. Added Probiotics

Many premium foods include probiotics to support digestion.

These help:

- Break food down more efficiently
- Improve gut health
- Reduce waste output over time

Types of Koi Food (And Which Is Right for You)

Koi food generally falls into three categories:

Budget Koi Food

- Lower cost upfront
- Often uses cheaper ingredients
- Typically produces more waste

Best for: Low-maintenance ponds or tight budgets

Mid-Range Koi Food

- Better balance of cost and quality
- Improved digestibility
- Reduced waste compared to budget options

Best for: Most pond owners

Premium Koi Food

- High-quality, highly digestible ingredients
- Often includes probiotics
- Lowest waste output

Best for: High-quality koi and performance-focused ponds

Cheap vs Expensive Koi Food: What’s the Real Difference?

One of the biggest questions is:

Why does one koi food cost £30 and another £120 for the same size bag?

The answer comes down to how much of that food your koi can actually use.

Real Price Comparison (5kg Bags)

- Betta Tricolour Pellets – £29.99
- Nishikoi Growth – £59.99
- Medikoi Probiotic – £79.99
- Saki Hikari – £119.99

That’s nearly a £100 difference—but the impact on your pond can be even bigger.

Koi Food Comparison: Cost vs Waste vs Quality

Attribute	Betta Pond Pellets	Nishikoi Growth	Medikoi Probiotic	Saki Hikari
Price per kg	~£6.00	~£12.00	~£16.00	~£24.00
Digestibility	Low–medium	Medium	High	Very high
Waste Output	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Filter Impact	High load	Moderate	Reduced	Minimal
Best For	Budget ponds	General use	Water quality focus	Premium koi

---

How Koi Food Affects Waste and Water Quality

This is where many pond owners run into problems.

Poor-quality food is one of the biggest causes of excessive koi waste.

As a simple rule of thumb:

One handful of food can produce multiple handfuls of waste
That waste can then fuel algae growth

This leads to:

- Murky or green water
- Increased filter maintenance
- Reduced water clarity

Why Some Koi Foods Create More Waste

When koi can’t properly digest their food:

- More passes straight through the fish
- More waste enters the pond
- Your filter has to work harder

Some foods can even:

- Coat filter media
- Reduce flow
- Lower filtration efficiency

So you end up with more waste and less ability to deal with it.

Best Koi Food for Different Situations

For General Ponds

A mid-range food like Nishikoi is often the best balance of cost and performance.

For High-Quality Koi

Premium foods like Medikoi or Saki Hikari support:

- Growth
- Colour
- Overall health

For Reducing Waste and Maintenance

Higher digestibility foods are key.

Less waste = cleaner water and less work

For Budget-Conscious Pond Owners

Lower-cost food can work—but expect:

- More waste
- More maintenance

Is Premium Koi Food Worth It?

It depends on your priorities.

You can either:

Spend less on food and more on maintenance

Or:

Spend more on food and reduce the problems it creates

Either way, you’re paying somewhere.

For most people, a good mid-range or premium food offers the best long-term value.

What Do We Recommend at Shirley Aquatics?

It’s important to be transparent.

We naturally lean towards mid to high-quality foods—not because they’re more expensive, but because they consistently deliver better results in real ponds.

That said:

The best food is always the one that suits your pond, your fish, and your goals.

The Bottom Line: Choosing the Right Food for Your Koi

Choosing the best koi food isn’t about picking the most expensive option—it’s about choosing the most suitable one.

If your pond is struggling with:

- Waste
- Algae
- Constant maintenance

Then your food is one of the first things to review.

Get the food right, and everything becomes easier:

- Cleaner water
- Healthier fish
- Less ongoing work

What Should You Do Next?

If you’re unsure whether your current food is the right fit, the next step is simple:

Compare what you’re feeding now against higher-digestibility options and see how it stacks up.

If you want help choosing the right koi food for your pond, speak to our team at Shirley Aquatics—we’re always happy to guide you based on your setup, fish, and goals.