

Summary of AKC Membership Survey Results

This document is a summary of responses to the Summer 2006 AKC Membership Survey. Numbers preceding each paragraph correspond to the question number on the Survey. We received 98 completed surveys, out of an approximate base of around 200 members (considering that family memberships allowed 2 survey responses per household, and that former members were also sent surveys.) All hand-written surveys were transcribed into the online database before results were compiled. All surveys were submitted anonymously, so people were free to be candid. Let's remember that frankness was a *goal* here (and one of the key reasons why we did an anonymous survey). We *wanted* members to relay opinions that they might be reluctant to voice in person. We want to see if we can curtail membership losses; perhaps learn why people decide *not* to renew their AKC memberships. No heads of any organization can please all the members all the time, so I'd ask our Club leadership to please consider opinions expressed in the Survey as *constructive* criticism rather than as a personal affront.

I have done my best to give an unbiased synopsis of the responses. However, as with any research project, numbers are subject to human interpretation. This summary document has been written for those wanting a quick (?) overview of the responses to this exhaustive survey. Much more detail can be gleaned by actually viewing the raw data and verbatims. I would encourage all Executive Board members and Committee Chairs to do a more thorough review of the raw data for their particular area of interest. Board members or Committee Chairs wanting assistance in interpreting the raw data need only ask for help, and it will be provided.

Not every returned Survey was completed in its entirety (which was to be expected, given the length of the Survey.) So, any analysis of member response needs to take this into consideration. Many questions had only 30-40 total responses. Again, this is another reason to review the raw data (which shows actual reply totals per question) before drawing any strong conclusions. Therefore, this Survey should be viewed primarily as a valid *indication* of the opinions and thoughts of *active and interested members and former members*; any take on the data extrapolating these responses to represent the opinions of the entire membership base runs the risk of being statistically invalid. Nonetheless, the Survey results should serve as a useful tool for future AKC Officers and Chairs, to guide them toward providing a more meaningful and worthwhile Club experience for all members.

I thank all the AKC members who contributed to the success of this survey, from the initial brainstorming session, all the way through the mailing of the printed copies...including all you Survey respondents! But I would be remiss if I didn't especially acknowledge Herve Rijnveld by name for his contributions to the project.

Respectfully,
Gary Montalto
AKC Survey Chair

NOTE: Use of the word "respondent" in this document is associated with figures representing the total number of members who submitted survey responses. Use of the word "answerers" is associated with figures representing *only* the number of respondents *who answered that particular question*, as not every question was answered by every respondent.

GENERAL STATISTICAL QUESTIONS

1002 Word of mouth was the most common reason that caused people joined the AKC. All other major club events were equally effective.

1003 General statistics about our membership:

- More than 63% of the membership has been in the hobby for over 5 years.
- Membership longevity is equally spread between newbees and people with over 10 years in the club.
- 72% of members have 2 ponds or less.
- 65% have over 5k gallons.

1004 Reported estimates of members' current koi hobby investment:

- 71% say their pond hardware investment is < \$10k.
- 80% say their fish investment is <\$5k.
- 72% say their landscape investment is <\$10k.

1005 More facts about our membership:

- While the majority use commercial filters, a third use home-made ones.
- Twice as many built their own ponds as had ponds built by professionals.
- Pet quality koi keepers outnumber show quality keepers 4:1.
- 1/3 of the membership keep goldfish as well.
- More than 10% keep other kinds of fish, too.
- 58% keep water plants.

1006 Half of our membership know former Club members. The major reason mentioned for dropping out was due to personality conflicts and/or club politics.

1007 60% of our respondents know other koi keepers who are not currently AKC members. Reasons why they are not members involve geographic distance and/or their level of involvement in the hobby is not strong.

1008 N/A

1009 58% of respondents indicated a broad range of interests in other aspects of Japanese culture, such as gardening, art, architecture, martial arts, cultural ceremonies, history, cooking.

1010 and 1011 69% have attended JapanFest at some point in the past, and 62% said they would do so again. Those that haven't attended said it was because they were unaware of JapanFest. Many indicated their attendance was related to our Koi Show being there, and their primary interest in attending JapanFest was because our Club was there.

1012 68% of respondents buy koi-related merchandise more than 5 times per year.

1013 Respondents are equally likely to buy at retail as online; however, frequent buyers tend to buy at retail.

1014 When our respondents were asked to name their 3 favorite koi-related vendors, 42 distinct vendors were mentioned as answers to this question. Of those, the top vote getters were: #1: AES; #2 Coastal; #3 (tie) Kieren and Blackwater Creek; #5: Pond Doc; #6 (tie) Ray Abell, Wet Pets, Wakoola. Ebay ranked highly, if ebay purchases from different vendors are combined.

1015 When asked why they favored these vendors, all answers revolved around quality, price, service, and knowledge.

1016 When asked how they heard about these vendors, the votes were: #1: word of mouth; #2: our Koi Show; #3: (generic) magazine

1017 68% of respondents reported that they have not had a bad experience with a vendor.

1018 58% of respondents spend less than \$500 per year on fish food, supplies, etc.

1019 67% of respondents spend less than \$500 per year on pond hardware/equipment.

1020 65% of respondents spend less than \$500 per year on koi/fish.

FUTURE DIRECTION FOR THE AKC

1101 Respondents were asked to rate their personal interest in the following categories:

- 88% are interested in “keeping koi ONLY”.
- 54% are interested in “keeping both koi and goldfish”.
- 68% are interested in “fish-optional water gardening”.
- 87% are interested in “water plants”.
- 73% are interested in “marginal/terrestrial plants”.
- A majority of people who answered were not interested in either indoor aquariums or tropical fish.

1102 The predominant “other” interest mentioned was “general gardening and landscaping”.

1103 Club leadership needs to read the verbatims of this question to get a real feel for the desires of the membership regarding what they consider a “successful” club. In general, there is a desire for non-political socialization and camaraderie, combined with education. There also is a wish to see MORE members take an active role in the club activities.

1104 When asked about possibly “chapterizing” the AKC, 40% of respondents had no opinion. Of those that had an opinion, those that were opposed to chapterization outnumbered those in favor 2.4:1. The verbatims reveal a host of reasons why people answered the way they did.

WEB SITE

1201 and 1202 96% of answerers have seen the Club website, and the same percentage are satisfied with what they see on the site.

1203 and 1204 People were in favor of adding an interactive forum by 2:1. However, 87% declined to volunteer to man such a forum.

1205 No strong feelings one way or the other regarding “for members only” site pages. But, of those in favor, there was an interest in privacy of confidential member information, an interest in having a classifieds section, and a member forum page.

1206 When asked about usefulness of possible inclusions to the website:

- 90% of answerers would find “formula/conversion factors” useful.
- 96% of answerers would find “koi health” useful.
- 91% of answerers would find “classifieds” useful.
- 93% of answerers would find “member pond with photos” useful.
- 97% of answerers would find “links to other important sites” useful.

1207 Other topics of interest for our website included having member contact info available and photos of koi varieties, and help for newbie koi keepers. (Verbatims contain more detail.)

NEWSLETTER

- 1301 80% of answerers read 5 or more issues of the newsletter per year.
- 1302 and 1303 Most receive the newsletter electronically via a high-speed internet connection.
- 1304 97% of answerers said they are satisfied with the newsletter.
- 1305 Articles having informational value were considered the favorite type of article. The most “useful” articles have to do with koi health. When asked what they’d like to “See More Of” in the newsletter, topics included wanting more articles by and about members. Conversely, like to “See Less Of” topics include previously-published articles.
- 1306 Members not buying from newsletter advertisers answered “No Need at Present” as the predominant reason.
- 1307 Approximately half of the respondents said they’d be willing to contribute articles. Two-thirds declined any interest in volunteering to help with the newsletter.
- 1308 Respondents were ambivalent regarding a “koi-related puzzle”, but were unanimous in their interest in reading about their fellow AKC member experiences.
- 1309 Most commenters think we have an excellent newsletter. They would like to see more articles about OUR club’s activities and members, including things discussed during the Board meetings.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

- 1401 No strong “need” to know one way or the other about meeting agendas and timing of meeting activities before deciding when to arrive at the meetings.
- 1402 97% of people who answered this question wanted meetings to last less than 3 hours.
- 1403 Sunday is still the preferred day for meetings, with Saturday being the 2nd choice.
- 1404 The majority want meetings to start between 1pm and 2pm.
- 1405 73% were in favor of moving some of the summer meetings to evening and/or night-time meetings to avoid summer daytime heat.
- 1406 Meeting attendance patterns are pretty consistent...those that attend frequently equal those that attend infrequently.
- 1407 78% of meeting attendees do not find food to be an important aspect of the meeting.
- 1408 The majority prefers “snacks AND drinks” as the refreshment preference.
- 1409 82% of answerers said the commercial sale of fish and supplies be allowed at meetings.
84% of answerers said hold the Club responsible for fish/products sold at meetings.
77% of answerers said they have a problem hearing guest speakers at meetings.
No strong opinion one way or the other regarding meeting dates scheduled to avoid conflict with

major regional koi events.

61% of answerers said meetings should NOT accommodate children to encourage family attendance.

- 1410 63% of answerers said there was no benefit to providing a non-fanatical spouse gathering area during guest speaker's talk.
- 1411 90% of answerers are in favor of vendors sponsored meetings (pay for the food), and demonstrate their products in the process.
- 1412 Answerers were in favor of paying an extra fee in order to hear a nationally renowned speaker at a Club meeting by a ratio of 4:1.
- 1413 Meeting topics suggested by respondents included:
- Pond Design and Construction (working with stone/cement; drain/pipe installation; pond equipment topics; waterfall building; the latest techniques in pond construction)
 - Filtration (advanced filtration; affordable filters and media products; commercial filter installation; the latest techniques in pond filtration)
 - Koi (selecting quality koi; where to buy; koi breeders information; selecting tategoi,
 - Quarantine protocols; quarantine facilities
 - Koi Health (health treatment products; disease identification and treatment (including how to do a scrape); parasite control; using meters, instruments, microscopes; leading-edge research in pond and fish care)
 - Pond Care (water quality; maintenance tasks to be done at start-up, daily, weekly, monthly, and end-of-year)
 - Koi Foods
 - Terrestrial landscaping (building shade for koi and people; plants and gardening)
 - Wet Labs
 - Koi Judging Criteria (even perhaps a pseudo-show where members judge from five or six same variety fish after being given a handout on characteristics to judge for, and a judge from AKCA would then critique the same fish.)
 - New Product Reviews
 - Travelogues (pictures and discussion of different places in koi-dom, such as someone's trip to Japanese fish farms, etc.)
 - Sharing Experiences (pond owners explanation on their pond and reasons for getting into the hobby; members voicing their experiences, both good and bad)
 - Water Gardening (plants)
 - National/Regional Speakers (with or without Powerpoint presentations)
 - Learning About Goldfish
 - Koi Farming (raising, tending, feeding koi)
 - Meeting topics that are not overly technical
- 1414 81% of answerers said that the social aspects of the meetings were important; 100% said the educational aspect is important; 55% of answerers said that raffles are NOT an important part of meetings.
- 1415 Suggested raffle items could be broken into two general categories:

Practical Items

- meters; bowls; fish supplies; plants; books; food; filter stuff; nets; health products; bacterial products; medications; chemicals; floating islands; predator control items; test kits; shirts; koi; free membership dues; aquarium-related items; tickets to national koi events; club benefits

Decorative Items

- yard art; stuff for water gardens; koi art; posters; windsock; fish-related gift items; less kitsch (replaced by something more high-end); NOT recycled gifts

(verbatim contain more ideas and comments about raffles)

1416 56% of answerers said they had no problem with enjoying the meetings. However, the rest mentioned the following as contributors to their dissatisfaction:

- lack of focus on koi keeping, which is the purpose of the club
- distance
- difficulty hearing the speakers; people talking during lectures
- lack of fixed agenda, not happy with current meeting agendas
- executive meeting runs late and cuts into general meeting time
- confrontational / inconsiderate individuals
- lack of “substance” in the meeting topics / irrelevant topics / repetitive subject matter
- inconvenient meeting day/time
- feeling left out; not part of established groups/cliques
- time constraints
- heat
- insignificant guest speakers; boring speakers
- speakers too technical
- tired of hearing about KHV
- not adhering to scheduled start times for each aspect of the meeting
- children in attendance
- politics

(It should be noted that not sticking to the scheduled start times and agenda was mentioned multiple times.)

1417 84% of answerers thought that the “pond pride” idea (meeting host describes their pond, filtration, and koi) was valuable.

1418 and 1419 N/A

1420 70% of answerers were interested in the “mini pond tour” concept (viewing clustered member ponds, occasionally in lieu of monthly meeting).

1421 81% would make their homes available for such mini tours. Of those that said “no”, the reasons included: distance; parking issues; non-show-worthy pond; redundant, since meetings and pond tour already showcase member ponds.

1422 Additional comments made to improve the monthly meeting experience:

- show videos of famed Japanese pond keepers, as well as various koi shows from around the world.
- more nuts and bolts concerning keeping koi
- adhere more closely to the scheduled agenda

- (with owners permission) have a pond-side “health” test with scraping/microscope. Allow others to look at slides. Test water quality. Good practice & experience for everyone.
- more informative speakers
- publish a meeting agenda with an approximate timetable for each agenda item in advance, preferably in the newsletter published just prior to that month’s meeting. And, adhere to that agenda timetable as much as possible.
- actually DO something... so often it’s a lunch bunch and not a real meeting
- keep the membership better updated at each monthly meeting
- inform general membership of the progress of all upcoming events
- use business manners to conduct the meeting
- have a well-planned event, speaker, or subject.
- relay what was said and planned during the Executive Committee’s meeting
- stop out-of-control spending for food at meetings
- provide an area for members to bring their dogs
- don’t allow kids at meetings; don’t burden hosts by having to accommodate kids (Unhappy members have expressed intention to drop out if kids are present.)
- schedule meetings at more centralized locations.
- move ALL the summer meetings to evenings or nights, to avoid heat.
- have meetings on days other than weekend days.
- vendors allowed to sell at meetings should be compelled to offer a discount. Have them sponsor meetings (pay for the food), and demonstrate their products, which would provide great information and not deplete our club funds.

(verbatim contain additional comments)

FLOWER SHOW

- 1501 88% of answerers feel that we should consider participation. Those that said “no” gave the following reasons:
- has nothing to do with koi or ponds
 - a large amount of work for little return.
 - it has become a one-man operation
 - we spend as much as it makes.
 - the show booth is not manned during much of the show, and we can no longer sell memberships.
 - people are there for flowers, not to join clubs.
- 1502 A little over half of the answerers have volunteered to help put on this event. Of those that haven’t volunteered, the reasons given had to do with: lack of time/work conflict; live outside of Atlanta metro; too new a member; never been asked; and not interested
- 1503 Less than half of the answerers would volunteer again. Objections included the following: Flower Show has nothing to do with koi keeping; insufficient knowledge about koi; lack of available time; not really interested; have volunteered previously, but not been asked to help again; would consider under new Chairperson.
- 1504 Comments and/or suggestions to improve the Flower Show experience:
- We need to be able to pass out info about the club and membership applications
 - Offer a free ticket to those that help setup

- More emphasis on educational aspects. This is a chance to promote good koi husbandry.
- We should avoid misleading exhibits.
- Less is more; Keep things simple; Exhibits should be kept to a minimum and never should be a “Back-breaker”.
- AKC should be available for Koi questions, not as main labor to build the display.
- This project is a lot of work for a little pay off.
- The Flower Show was the door that opened up the club to our family! I believe it is a very educational opportunity for the club and a forum through which the club is put before the public. It is a great way to gain new members.
- Keep cost to a minimum. Make it a money maker.
- Have more members on the committee and more helpers at the shows ALL THE TIME.
- Some people volunteer to get free passes to the show and not work.
- Create more excitement and discussions, to inform members about the plans for the show. Decisions about the booth seem to be very secretive. The general club membership is discouraged from giving ideas and getting involved. Maybe giving members a sense of participation would generate more interest.

AUCTION

Questions for sellers

- 1601 24% of survey respondents said they would sell fish at the next AKC auction.
- 1602 12 answerers said they would sell 5 or fewer fish; 7 said they'd sell 6 to 10 fish. 3 people intend to sell more than 10 fish.
- 1603 The vast majority of sellers will only need one tank.
- 1604 Only about half of the answerers said they'd be willing to pay a premium for multiple tubs.
- 1605 The overwhelming majority said that they would NOT be willing to pay a premium for tubs at the front end of the auction sequence.
- 1606 Only about half of the answerers said they be in favor of a lottery to determine who gets tubs at the front end of the auction sequence.
- 1607 About half the answerers were interested in a non-auction sale area.
- 1608 63% of answerers thought that recouping their investment in fish was important
71% of answerers thought that subsidizing hobby costs was important.
100% of answerers thought that selling ALL fish brought to auction was important.
96% of answerers thought that reducing overstock was important.
- 1609 Of the 28 people who answered this question, twice as many said they were in favor of a 2nd auction per year.
- 1610 Of the 24 people who answered this question, twice as many said they were NOT in favor of giving members who did not sell fish in the first auction priority in the second.
- 1611 Sellers would prefer a Spring auction as their first choice; Summer comes in second, and Fall comes in third.

1612 Comments/suggestions to improve the auction SELLING experience:

- Tub assignment should be on a first come first serve basis.
- Tubs should be allocated based on pre-registration.
- Auction fish by size, or lot size.
- Make sellers net/bag own fish, AKC can supply bags, oxygen.
- Allow sellers to sell/trade fish 1st hour to other auction sellers, then 2nd hour sell/auction to only AKC members, then auction the rest to the public.
- Need more Advertising & Promotion.
- Allow vendors an opportunity to sell
- Unhappy with the current ratio split between seller and club
- Sit all bidders in chairs in front of auctioneer. Have a video screen set up where bidders view the fish to be auctioned, as a roving cameraman walks from tank to tank shooting a live video feed to the screen of that fish as it's being bid on. Auction bidders would have plenty of time prior to the auction to walk around and view fish in person, making notes about tank numbers on fish they intend to bid on. Sold fish would be immediately bagged and tagged with winning bidder's number, the same as is done now.
- Need more buyers
- Keep auction moving along quickly.
- First choice tubs should be given to members based on how much they contribute to the club. Someone who contributes at all the functions should be given priority over someone who never attends meetings.
- Start on time
- Better organization
- Save best fish till last so people stay around
- No dealers allowed to sell
- No sales allowed outside of auction.
- No negative comments about the fish by the auctioneer or other people working the auction. The less a fish sells for, the less the club makes.

QUESTIONS FOR BUYERS

1701 About half of the survey respondents were inclined to purchase fish at the auction, with comments about price and quality of available fish affecting their willingness to bid.

1702 69% of buyers said they were interested in a non-auction sales area to purchase from.

1703 The overwhelming majority is opposed to have multiple auctioneers, due to the confusion it would create.

1704 59% of answerers expressed an interest in attending more than one auction per year.

1705 Buyers would prefer a Spring auction as their first choice, Summer comes in second, and Fall comes in third.

1706 Suggestions / comments for improving the auction experience for BUYERS

- KHV-free fish
- High quality koi for sale
- Provide quality bags and boxes, additional charge ok.

- Somehow provide more direction on where the auction will proceed from one tank to the other and not ask certain people what fish they want to bid on next.
- Might want to consider letting those sellers that want to set a “buy now” price on some fish do that, and give the buyers an hour before the auction starts to buy those fish. Those that are left or not put up for “buy now” sale can then be auctioned normally.
- Keep the proceeds split at 75%/25% for all, without regard to attendance record.
- Give the auctioneer a microphone
- Speed up the auction process. As it’s now done, I may have to wait for over a half hour for the auction to cycle back through to the tank/fish I’m interested in.
- Having 3 or more auctioneers working sequentially; keeps enthusiasm high.
- Start on time, better organization
- Fish could be arranged by size. Example: large fish sold first, mid. fish second and then small fish. Buyers wanting small fish could look at plants, etc, while others are being sold.
- Labeling the tanks with what type of fish and size

POND TOUR

- 1801 45% of the survey respondents indicated they would be willing to show their ponds on a tour. Of those who answered “no”, there was no consensus reason why not.
- 1802 Hosts’ seasonal preference to show their ponds showed Summer holding a slight edge over Spring as the #1 choice, with Fall being the clear 3rd choice.
- 1803 Visitors’ seasonal preference to tour ponds showed Spring holding a slight edge over Summer as the #1 choice, with Fall being the clear 3rd choice.
- 1804 80% of answerers said they would give extra consideration to buy from advertisers who purchased space in the Tour booklet.
- 1805 89% of answerers have gone on our Pond Tour. No answerer said they had no interest in it or wouldn’t go again. Reasons given for not yet attending a tour mostly involved time or distance constraints.
- 1806 Answerers rated seeing garden and/or pond vegetation at its peak more important to their enjoyment as a tour-taker than seeing koi at their peak. Not surprisingly, minimizing driving time between ponds ranked high on the enjoyment scale.
- 1807 On the question of who should pay to go on tours, answerers were equally split between those who thought Club members should pay a reduced rate and those who thought everyone should pay equally. A couple people suggested per-family or per-vehicle ticketing as an alternative.
- 1808 Suggestions for improving the Tour experience included:
- Clustering ponds geographically, for ease of driving.
 - Different ponds on Saturday vs. Sunday.
 - Greeters at each pond.
 - Involve more volunteers to help with Tour planning and Tour execution.
 - Tour by bus (more fun when touring as a group).
 - Better signage
 - Better directions

- Better descriptions of ponds in the tour booklet. (before deciding to drive a great distance, it would be nice to know what to expect at the pond site.)
- Offering ‘day-specific tickets’ or ‘geographic cluster-specific tickets’, at a discount, for those who only want to do ‘mini-tours’.
- Be more selective in choosing “worthwhile” ponds to show the public, yet don’t discriminate between large and small ponds.
- Better advertising and promotion of the Tour to the public, to maximize Club income.

KOI SHOW

- 1901 47% of respondents said they DO NOT intend to show fish at the Show. The most frequently cited reason for this decision has to do with not wanting to stress their fish (or in some cases, themselves). Second most cited reason has to do with not having “show-quality” fish. Other common reasons given include: fear of KHV/disease contamination; too hard to catch them/too much work/too much of a hassle.
- 1902 The verbatims of suggested enticements to get people to enter their fish in the show indicate that most who won’t show are pretty resolute in their conviction not to show. However, some members appear to “on the fence”, and they suggest that having other club members assist them in selecting which of their fish are worth showing, helping them catch and transport their fish, and keeping entry fees low or offering a discount to “first-time showers” are options to consider, to enhance show participation.
- 1903 91% of answerers said it was “likely” or “more than likely” that they would buy something from vendors exhibiting at the Show.
- 1904 87% of answerers said that vendor purchasing incentives listed in the Show booklet would be considered “valuable”.
- 1905 There was no clear preference when asking show attendees (not entering fish) which season they would prefer to attend the Koi Show. Conclusion: it doesn’t matter to attendees when the Show is held.
- 1906 However, when persons planning to enter fish in the Show are asked for a season preference, Summer and Fall are about equally desirable, with Spring being a clear 3rd choice for this group. (Note: 20% of all selected answers were in the “no preference” column.)
- 1907 75% of answerers were in favor of giving Club Members first shot at vendor products and fish at a “members only” preview event before officially opening the Show to the public.
- 1908 Answers received regarding activities and exhibits people expect to see at our Show indicate that all the things we are doing now are appreciated. Some people suggested we add “plant vendors”; bonsai or other Japanese-related art forms; and perhaps something to entertain kids, such a tank where kids could hand-feed koi.
- 1909 Only half of respondents answered the question regarding partnering with other koi shows, so drawing conclusions is problematic. Of those who DID answer this question, 2 out of 3 favored the partnering idea.
- 1910 Regarding preference for the type of show to stage, 94% of answerers chose our current format of “an open invitational regional show” as either their 1st or 2nd choice. Voters who preferred a bigger show or a smaller show were about equal in number.

1911 (no question with this number)

1912 Comments expressed about ways to enhance the Koi Show experience included:

- wanting better organization/execution.
- recruiting more volunteers to spread out the work load.
- more and better advertising of the Show.
- increase the educational aspects of the Show; have knowledgeable staff available to answer questions.
- holding Show at a different venue that had more public appeal and/or provided close-by non-Show entertainment options for non-koi-fanatic spouses and family members.
- exclude koi purchased from vendors on site from being eligible for show awards. Some people feel it isn't fair to let someone "buy" an award-winning fish on site and instantly compete with others.

SPECIAL EVENTS

2001 Members "interested" to "very interested" in the following activities:

Wet labs	86%
Seminars	90%
Day trips to other koi regional events	85%
Day trips to koi farms or vendor businesses	91%
Day trip to Japanese cultural event	54%
Behind-the-scenes aquarium trip	89%
Build-a-waterfall demonstration day	79%
Join-a-contractor day	66%
End-of-year pot luck	72%
BBQ / pig roast	74%
Help / outreach community programs	73%

2002 Suggestions for other special events included:

- koi-buying trip to Japan
- sponsor/maintain a publicly accessible koi pond as an AKC promotional tool
- day trips to other koi clubs' events
- hands-on mini-projects as part of monthly meeting agenda
- nighttime event (to see illuminated member ponds)
- consider adding gift cards/gift certificates as raffle items

PARTICIPATION / VOLUNTEERISM

2101 3 out of 4 answerers thought it was okay to outsource for volunteers if necessary.

2102 Answerers were split 50/50 regarding the elimination of any of our annual events. Of those who said "yes, eliminate" and elaborated with a suggestion, the most mentioned event was the Flower Show. The other predominant suggestion was to eliminate any event that had trouble recruiting volunteers or that had poor attendance.

- 2103 57% of answerers thought that volunteers should receive some reward for their work. Some of the suggested rewards included:
- free or reduced price memberships
 - free t-shirts; free Show pins; free parking (if necessary)
 - free entry into the event they are volunteering for
 - a “points” system for volunteer hours worked, redeemable for Club event fees or reduced price membership renewals.
 - verbal recognition at meetings and/or mention in the Newsletter.
 - unspecified Club “awards”; unspecified “discounts”
- 2104 71% of answerers said they volunteered for Club events. Of those that answered “no”, some of the suggested reasons included:
- lack of free time
 - new member shyness
 - volunteer “burnout”
- 2105 When asked if new members should be *required* to volunteer “x” hours per year to the Club, 74% of answerers said “no”. Of those answerers who said “yes”, the suggested number of hours ranged from 1hr to 12hrs, and averaged a suggested 6.5 hours.
- 2106 There was a tremendous response to this question, asking what the Club should do to encourage volunteerism. Suggestions included the following:
- making sure existing volunteers are not overworked and get burned out.
 - reach out to new members with one-to-one invitations by Club Chairs. Shyness/self-perceived inexperience of new members probably keeps many from getting involved.
 - offering incentives (like extra raffle tickets, free fish, “volunteer-only” after-parties)
 - keep track of volunteer hours over the course of the year, and have a system set up ahead of time to award free memberships or other goodies, based on hours worked.
 - link joining the Club with a small amount of mandatory volunteering; this would automatically discourage members not intent on being “active”.
 - requiring “volunteering” would alienate some members, and would require a change in the current Club By-Laws.
 - make volunteering more fun and a positive experience.
 - be more specific about activities required/hours required *before* asking for volunteers. Ask for help for a specified number of hours on a specified day.
 - phone members individually, rather than ask for help only from those attending meetings or through a Newsletter announcement.
 - consider implementing the Koi Buddy concept (pairing new members with old members), to better welcome newcomers and hopefully get them involved and volunteering.
 - publicly recognize each volunteer by name, at meetings or in the Newsletter.

BENEFITS OF CLUB MEMBERSHIP

- 2201 Members “interested” to “very interested” in the following member benefits:

Access to new sources of fish

88%

Availability of educational trips	93%
Learning from experienced koi keepers	98%
Sell excess fish/supplies at auction	64%
Vendor contacts offering discounts to AKC	92%
Socialization/camaraderie with like-minded	89%
Saving money through bulk-buying	81%
Food/beverages provided at monthly meetings	46%
Advice on koi care & health issues	100%
Advice on pond design & construction	93%
Advice on breeding & raising koi	86%
Having support / mentor in the Club	91%
Having volunteer opportunities	62%

2202 When asked about former member benefits that they'd like to see reinstated, answerers mentioned the following:

- no additional cost for *attending* Club events, like the Pond Tour
- reinstate Club policy for borrowing Club-owned equipment in emergencies
- do a better job of informing members about what decisions are being made

2203 Suggestions for additional benefits the club should offer included:

- implement the "Koi Buddy" / mentoring concept
- free Show pins for all Koi Show volunteers
- organize/host educational opportunities or seminars, outside of meetings
- publicize the club library more
- free or discounted tanks at the Koi Show
- consider a new style of raffle
- consider lowering dues or offering more for the money

2204 When asked about current member benefits that they wouldn't mind losing, answerers mentioned the following:

- *meals* at meetings; however, snacks and drinks are still appropriate
- eliminate club reimbursement for hosting meetings; if someone wants to host, they should pick up the entire tab and decide what to serve; or get vendors to pay for refreshments
- drop any event that can't garner sufficient volunteer help

2205 It was a 3 to 1 margin of answerers that favored an all-inclusive membership fee, versus an a-la-carte pricing system. Verbatim comments indicate that many members are satisfied with our current dues system. Some suggested we tie membership dues to volunteerism. Others suggested there be a case-by-case "hardship" consideration for members that couldn't afford our current "high" dues.

2206 86% of answerers thought the "koi buddy" concept was "useful" or "more than useful".

2207 73% of answerers said they would volunteer to be a "koi buddy". Of those who said "no", reasons given for that answer included:

- distance

- age
- lack of time
- lack of expertise
- disillusionment with the Club

FINAL THOUGHTS

2301 No shortage of comments when the respondents were asked about what could be done to promote the Club to prospective members in a positive and effective way! A sampling of the suggestions:

- design a more professional Membership Application, highlighting member benefits
- create a portable booth to set up at public events or retailers; have a book of member pond photos to show interested people
- emphasize that our club is for *all* koi hobbyists, not just for “show-quality” koi keepers; most koi lovers started out with “pet-quality” koi.
- add “new member” inquiry capability to the Club website and by telephone voice mail...and be sure to respond quickly to such inquiries.
- hosting a koi seminar at a garden center
- *pay* to advertise the Club
- promise new members a “koi buddy” when they join
- emphasize the educational aspects of AKC membership
- implement some sort of AKC “presence” at JapanFest in Stone Mountain.
- emphasize the social aspects of the AKC before all other aspects of the club
- remember that the meetings are often where guests decide whether or not to join, so we need to make meeting guests feel welcome.
- hold our special events in more publicly visible places.
- more word-of-mouth invitations by our membership to other known koi keepers.

2302 A final wrap-up verbatim question, where respondents were asked for suggestions for improvements in the AKC that weren't addressed elsewhere in the Survey. Comments included the following:

- stay true to the current Club Mission Statement and By-Laws, with the focus on koi
- be sure to match “koi buddies” with newbees that are of similar age, have similar interests, and own similar types of filtration technologies.
- discourage the intra-club bickering, and support one another in our mutual interest of koi keeping.
- make meetings more interesting with better guest speakers.
- help members “buddy-up” with other close-by members, so they can support each other when having problems or go on vacation.
- keep listening to member feedback and adapt the Club to changing member interests.
- consider adding “special interest” sub-groups to the Club; for example, goldfish enthusiasts, plant fanciers, koi buddies; allow these groups to hold separate meetings in addition to the monthly general meeting.
- find and elect more competent Officers (editor's note: please don't take offense...just reporting what was written...)
- treat all members equally, regardless of their volunteerism or attendance levels.
And last but not least:
- Good job! Keep up the good work!