



At the January meeting David asked me to write a monthly column for the newsletter. We also discovered a lot of folks were in the dark about the AKCA's KHA program. So, I thought a brief review of KHA would be a good starting point.

Who: Koisan is the little guy in the picture above and Harosan is me -- Harold Biggio -- the club's Koi Health Advisor **candidate**.

Where / When: "God willing and the pond don't overflow," I will get my certification at the 26th Annual AKCA Seminar this June in Phoenix. Then I start pursuing my real goal -- Masters Certification which will take a couple of more years.

What: According to Spike Glover, the visionary KHA Program director, "the idea [for the KHA] grew out of the AKCA's desire to get more help, primarily veterinarian help, for the hobby. [However,] after examining the situation, it was concluded that... **vet help for the hobby was unlikely in our lifetime.**" So, building on the tradition of "hobbyists help[ing] other hobbyists," the program was born in 2001. This led to the idea of creating a course that assured a minimal [but challenging] level of competence and required continuing education to maintain certification. Currently there are 117 certified KHAs scattered across 26 states. In the Southeast, neither Georgia nor Alabama have a certified KHA.

How: Spike also noted that "the focus of the course is to learn and subsequently teach [other hobbyists] ways to keep [their] koi healthy. We all intuitively know that keeping any animal healthy is preferable to treating it after it becomes sick. That said, the program recognizes that sick happens (sorry, couldn't resist that one). So we include diagnosis and treatment in our course material."

"The KHA are not vets... In addition to, "first, do no harm," there are rules that restrict the KHAs' activities: they must not violate [federal and state] laws governing their activities and they may not charge for their services. (Obtaining reimbursement for direct out of pocket costs [however,] is permissible)... And, they cannot issue prescription medications. [However, there are] mechanisms for... [vet] consults so that such medications may be obtained if required."

"As envisioned... [KHAs] would give presentations at local, regional and national meetings, write articles for newsletters and other publications and discuss the principles of good koi health with individuals. If a koi owner had trouble with a pond or fish within the KHA's local area, they would either do a telephone consult or make a pond visit... determine the cause... and suggest potential solutions."

Well that's it... right from the "horse's mouth." I'm excited by all that I'm learning and awed by all that I have yet to learn. For me this is the start of an adventure... one that I hope you will share with me.

Coming issues: Here are a couple of topics I'm thinking about for coming issues:

- The Art of Koi Keeping: *Benign Neglect* (translated... “It’s not smart to mess with Mother Nature!”)
- Your Pond **CAN** Kill-----You! Tricks for staying healthy.

As you’re part of this little adventure, I need your input. Email me the topics you’re interested in, so I can target the columns to the membership’s “hot buttons.”

Also, please understand that *I’m not yet certified*. Feel free to email or call if you “hit the wall” on a husbandry or health issues or if you just need a “sounding board.” I might not have the answer and might be limited by what I can do until my certification, but I have a really good rolodex and generally will know of someone who can help.

Here’s to an uneventful spring for all... **Harosan**