

Can I purchase my minnows from a bait dealer out-of-state or catch them myself out-of-state and bring them with me to Wisconsin and use them for fishing?

Generally no, unless the fish are imported in compliance with permit requirements from Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection (DATCP). This is not a new law; DATCP rules have long required this. In addition, a Wisconsin Fish Import Permit from the DNR is also required to bring any nonnative minnow species into Wisconsin if they are to be used for fishing bait. Minnows obtained from Iowa or Minnesota may be used on the Mississippi, but not on other waters.

Can I purchase or obtain minnows from Iowa or Minnesota and use them on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River?

Yes, but only on the Mississippi River between the railroad tracks that follow both the East and West shorelines.

The new rules do not restrict using live minnows harvested from Wisconsin waters. What are the rules on harvesting minnows from the Great Lakes? Under the emergency rules, no live fish (including suckers) may be transported away from Lake Michigan, Green Bay, Lake Superior, and the Lake Winnebago system.



A Cornell University professor holds a muskellunge found dead in a northeastern US water. The virus had been detected and confirmed in other muskellunge samples from other northeastern waters.

A Sign of the Times

Boat landings and other access points will be posted to remind boaters and anglers of the precautionary measures that must be taken to help minimize the spread of the VHS virus.

VHS ALERT

BOATERS & ANGLERS

Do not move water and live fish (including bait fish) from this water.

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) virus is affecting fish species in this water. The virus is not a threat to people who want to eat their catch. YOU can help control the spread of this virus and other invasive species:

- ⚠️ **Drain all water from your boat and trailer, containers, and fishing equipment including bait buckets and coolers.**
- ⚠️ **Do not move live fish from these waters. All fish must be dead before leaving the landing or shoreline.**
- ⚠️ **Do not use minnows unless they were purchased from a licensed Wisconsin bait dealer or you caught them from the place you are fishing.**
- ⚠️ **Remove all visible plants, animals, and mud from your boat and trailer.**

If you witness a large number of dead or dying fish, please contact your local DNR office or call the DNR Hotline at 1-800-TIP-WDNR. For more information on the VHS virus, visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/pages/vhs.html>

Photo credit: Garth Traylor (USGS, Seattle WA)

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For specific regulations and additional information on the VHS virus visit the web site:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/pages/vhs.html>

Bureau of Fisheries Management
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MINNOWS AS BAIT

What Wisconsin anglers need to know to prevent spreading the VHS fish virus

Help Keep Wisconsin Fish Healthy

A new fish virus that caused large fish kills in several eastern Great Lakes states in 2005 and 2006 was recently discovered in Lake Michigan and Lake Winnebago in May, 2007. The virus may also be present in Lake Superior and the Mississippi River.



Signs of VHS virus in fish include bloody spots on the skin and in the muscle and tissues, pale or swollen internal organs, and "pop-eye" (swollen eyes).

The virus, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia, or VHS is not a threat to people who handle fish or want to eat their catch. However, it can spread easily to healthy fish that eat infected fish or absorb water carrying the virus.

New rules prohibit boaters and anglers from moving water and live fish, including minnows, from one location to another. The goal is to minimize the chance that an infected minnow or other fish, or water containing the virus, is accidentally released into a new lake or river. Please do your part to protect Wisconsin's great fishing by following the new rules.

New Emergency Rules

New emergency regulations for boaters and anglers went into effect in May, 2007 to protect Wisconsin's fisheries from the threat of VHS.

The new rules require that you:

- ⚠ Do not transport live fish, including minnows, away from the Great Lakes, Mississippi River, or Lake Winnebago drainages. This includes tributaries up to the first dam.

- ⚠ Drain all water from your boat, trailer, bait buckets, coolers, and other containers before you leave the landing or shore fishing site location.

- ⚠ Do not use live bait unless it was purchased from a Wisconsin bait dealer or legally captured by you from the place you are fishing.

- ⚠ Do not use cut bait from other waters (except when fishing in Lake Michigan, and Green Bay, or their tributaries up to the first dam).

Wisconsin anglers can continue to enjoy fishing and help prevent the spread of the VHS virus by knowing the answers to some of these common bait-related questions:

What if some of my bait minnows die in my minnow bucket or livewell while I am fishing on an inland lake before I have a chance to use them? Minnows that die in the bait container or while being used as bait while fishing can be used. They are still considered part of your live bait until you leave the water.

If I must drain all the water from my boat live wells and bait buckets, what am I supposed to do with my leftover minnows? Kill all live fish, including minnows, before you transport them away from the Mississippi River, Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Green Bay and Lake Winnebago or any connecting waters up stream to the first dam or obstruction impassable by fish. Once dead, the minnows may be buried, placed in a waste container, or preserved by using salt, salt brine, borax or some preservation method other than freezing or refrigeration.

What are legal methods of preserving dead bait- minnows, frogs and crayfish other than refrigeration and freezing? Use salt, salt brine, borax, or some other preservative to prevent or inhibit decay or spoiling.

The new rules say it's illegal to transport live fish away from Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, Lake Winnebago and the Mississippi River. When is a person considered to be "transporting" a fish? For the purpose of this rule, "transporting" a live fish means to move the fish to a different waterbody from where it was caught. While fishing the same waterbody, you can move your boat to a new location, or walk along the shore to a new location, with live fish or live fish eggs in your bait bucket or live well. Once you leave that waterbody for the day, however, you must kill all live fish, including unused minnows.

Do I have to drain the water from my bait bucket if it is not an attached part of the boat? Yes. The law requires that you drain the water from all equipment in the boat if the boat was used on Lake Michigan, Green Bay, Lake Superior, Lake Winnebago and the Mississippi River, including all connecting waters up to the first dam or other obstruction impassable by fish. This requirement aims to ensure that no water from these potentially VHS-infected lakes or rivers has gotten into your boat, trailer or other equipment and gets transported elsewhere. Drinking water or beverages carried on a boat or by passengers are not affected by the emergency rules.

Are there any restrictions on using other live bait? Worms, leaches, insects and larva are generally still legal to use. Consult the fishing regulations pamphlet for exceptions.

Is it legal to use frozen dead fish, fish eggs, crayfish, or frogs as bait on waters other than where it originated, if first tested for VHS? No. There is currently no way to identify such bait as VHS free.

When are fish or fish eggs considered dead and able to be transported away from a water legally? Fish or fish eggs that are not being kept or held in water will generally be considered to be dead by DNR. There must not be any intent or attempt to revive the fish or eggs later by putting them back into water.