

DEFINING AND ACHIEVING A QUALITY HATCHERY PRODUCT ^{AFS}

Mark Kornick
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Big Springs Trout Hatchery
Lewistown, MT 59457

Using fish hatcheries, fish managers can utilize a number of species, and strains within species, to meet objectives of fisheries management goals. Each species and its associated strains have distinct traits that can be matched to a fishery's needs. It is these known strain-specific traits that are the basis for a water body's stocking program. It follows then that fisheries managers must be able to rely on a hatchery product that at very least survives transport to the water, and at best predictably fulfills its intended goal. Like any intensive culture production hatchery, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks' Big Spring Trout Hatchery is an unnatural setting and therefore a stressful environment in which to raise fish. Because of these rearing conditions, the fish culturist must optimize every input into the fish's environment to attain a quality product. These inputs include nutrition and feeding levels, feeding methods, tolerable densities, temperature, external stressors, egg development timing, growth rates, and size structure maintenance.