



“Saving our Fisheries Together”

Angler Responsibilities - Take Care of your Catch Handling of fish

Proper fish care begins before we hook our first fish. The following steps should be taken to increase YOUR survival rates.

Fish care starts in your boat. It is your responsibility. An angler may have a fish in his livewell for up to 8 hours in a day, if the fish is properly cared for as outlined below no harm will normally come to them from their “boat ride.” But if YOU do not take care of your catch all day, the weighin crew will be very limited to what they can do in the few minutes they have with your fish.

Here are a few easy steps that will help ensure as many fish as possible are released alive after every event.

1. Keep your live well full!
2. Fill your livewell away from the launch area, preferably at the first stop of the morning while the water is still at the lowest temperature of the day.
3. When you catch your first fish of the day, run the livewell pump on Recycle or Aeration only and run it continuously. Monitor the livewell temperature to insure that the temperature stays within +/- 5 degrees of the tournament water's surface temperature.
4. Do not play that fish to exhaustion if possible. The stress induced during this time period can be crucial in determining fish survival.
5. Use a live well additive like Rejuvenade or a Non-Iodized salt solution of 3 to 5 % at all times regardless of the season. This is a great inexpensive way to promote slime protection and reduce tournament related mortality.
6. Minimize contact between you and the fish. The slime coat on fish is one of the most important barriers to the prevention of disease and infection. Abrasions from improper handling, net abrasions or carpet burn will remove its slime coat.
7. If you use a landing net, please try to use one of the recommended rubber mesh or “soft mesh” type nets available. Frabill has long been a leader in this technology so use a similar product if you can.
8. Wet your hands before handling your catch to protect the slime coat.
9. Lifting a Bass by the lower jaw is still considered to be one of the best methods of handling your catch. Never hold a fish horizontally by the lower jaw unless support is provided under the belly, especially a big fish. If you want to admire your fish for a picture please make it quick. Thirty seconds out of the water after a long struggle will put a tremendous amount of stress on the fish. (Imagine running a mile and then holding your breath for 30 seconds!)

Hook Removal

We should always strive to remove the hook from a fish and return it to the water as soon as possible. If this isn't a practical solution then cut the line as close as possible to the hook and leave it in the fish. In years past this was the recommended procedure but with today's high tech alloys, hooks are lasting much longer so removing them is usually our best option.

Live well water condition

Black bass are known to survive in a wide range of water conditions from 35-97 Degrees F with the optimum temperature being in the 55 to 80 degree area. A general rule of thumb is that cooler is usually better than warmer provided we don't place the fish in a state of thermal shock by subjecting them to temperature swings greater than 10 to 12 degrees colder than their natural environment.

Dissolved oxygen

The reason cooler water is usually better is that oxygen is saturated more rapidly in cooler water. When a fish has been exposed to the stress of a fight they deplete oxygen from their blood just as we do when we run or exercise. In order to replenish this oxygen the fish has to be in water that is saturated in oxygen of at least 5ppm or higher for a specified period of time. The warmer the water the less oxygen that can be absorbed into it which results in Oxygen levels being less than 5ppm. In a nut shell the cooler the water the greater the potential to absorb oxygen. The greater the level of Oxygen the greater the potential survival rate of your catch.

Adding additives like Rejuvenade or a non-iodized salt solution also enhance a fish's survival rate. These additives increase the ability to absorb oxygen along with providing stress relieving chemicals to help calm the fish down and speed up the process of oxygen debt recovery and slime coat regeneration, all of which equals less stress. Another benefit of livewell additives is that they aid in the removal of hazardous gasses like ammonia that are released by fish in high stress environments. These amounts are very small but often they are the leading cause of live well fatality. An ammonia content of 0.1 ppm is stressful to a fish and a level of 1.0ppm is often deadly.

Summary

Fill your live well with clean cool water with an oxygen level higher than 5ppm and adding a livewell additive like Rejuvenade or a non-iodized salt solution to help with the stress reduction of the fish and ammonia dissipation is the recommended procedure. Recirculating the water in your live well while monitoring the temperature and dissolved oxygen concentration during the course of your day is a great way to keep your catch alive and preserve one of our most valuable resources.