

KEEPING BASS ALIVE

HOOKING, LANDING AND HANDLING



Minimize deep hooking by setting the hook as quickly as possible. Consider the use of circle hooks in appropriate baits. They have been shown to significantly reduce gut hooking. Do not play fish to exhaustion since this adds to stress levels and lengthens their recovery period.

PROTECT THE SLIME COAT. Fish secrete a protective “slime” or mucus as a barrier to disease. Every effort should be made to avoid removal of the mucus coat.

- Swinging or flipping fish into the boat and onto the floor should be avoided. Pulling small fish out of the water by the line allows the angler to grasp the lower jaw without having to grasp the fish’s body.
- The use of a landing net may be preferred. Landing nets made of soft, woven, knotless nylon or rubber do much less damage to the fish than nets made of hard, knotted nylon twine.
- When holding the bass, grasp the lower jaw. This usually immobilizes the fish, provides a good, firm hold and allows the angler to remove the hook(s) without touching the fish’s body. Once the fish is in the boat, hold it vertically, touching it elsewhere as little as possible. Never bend the fish’s head down or try to hold the fish horizontally by the lower jaw.

MINIMIZE HOOK REMOVAL INJURY. For years it was assumed that it was best to leave the hook in a deeply hooked fish because the metal would rust away. Recent studies, however, have confirmed that this is not always the case. Every effort should be made to remove hooks as quickly and with as little tissue damage as possible.

- Use long-nosed pliers, hemostat or hook removing tool to grasp and remove hooks.
- Learn the hook-reversal technique where the eye of the hook is pulled out the gill opening towards the fish’s tail, thus reversing the hook bend, allowing for easy extraction through the mouth using long-nosed pliers.

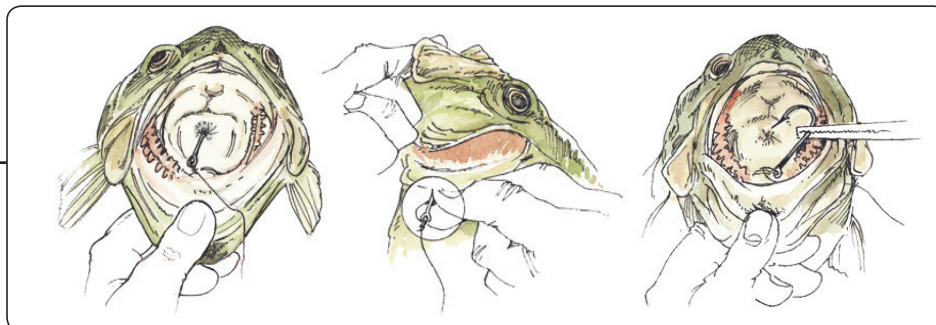
AIR EXPOSURE. Each air exposure adds more stress — landing, unhooking, measuring, bagging, weigh-in, etc.

- Unhook fish quickly and measure them on a wet measuring board or rule. Place them in the already filled livewell.
- As a rule-of-thumb, limit air exposure to no longer than you can hold your breath – because a fish out of water is holding his.

CULLING. Culling is legal in many states and provinces. However, in others a decision to keep or release a fish must be made immediately, before the fish is placed in the livewell. Be sure you know the local rules regarding culling.

- If livewell space is available, the smallest fish should be kept in a separate compartment. This makes identification and exchange very efficient. Alternatively, using a marker that clearly identifies the smallest fish and facilitates capture and removal from the livewell is an acceptable solution.
- Culling systems are now available that utilize small spring clips that clamp over the fish’s lip. These clips are attached to a short piece of color-coded floating tubing or rope. The main objective is to use a marking system that allows easy identification and reduces handling stress and injury.
- Do not use the shower curtain or safety-pin clips that require punching a hole in the fish’s mouth
- Do not use the culling tubes or ropes to hoist fish from the livewell. Use the rope to lead the fish to the surface, then grasp them by the lower jaw.

Minimizing Hook Removal Injury



TOYOTA supports conservation and encourages you to “Keep Bass Alive”

