



## PROPER CARE OF TOURNAMENT CAUGHT FISH



**Why should tournament anglers be concerned with proper care of the fish that they catch during an event?**

- Initial mortality can reach levels as high as 30%
- Delayed mortality can reach levels as high as 50%

**What are the sources of mortality in tournament caught fish?**

- Hooking injuries
- High water temperatures in the lake and livewell\*
- Low dissolved oxygen levels in the livewell\*
- Poor water quality in the livewell – Ammonia builds up from fish waste

*\*As water temperature increases, oxygen needs also increase and the need for adequate aeration is vital.*

### **Proper Handling to Increase Survival Rates**

1. Gentle handling to protect mucous coat and jaw. “Lipping” the fish is preferred.
2. Limit air exposure.
3. Have adequate size livewell with smooth surfaces to prevent injury.
4. Aerate/oxygen injection of livewell.
5. Cool water with ice packs to 10° F cooler than lake surface water temperature when lake temperatures are greater than 75° F. Four pounds of ice will lower temperature of 15 gallons of livewell water 10° F for three hours.
6. Flush livewell with fresh water periodically to prevent waste build-up.
7. Add **noniodized** salt at 1/3 cup per 5 gallons of water to reduce stress and ion loss.
8. **DO NOT USE HYDROGEN PEROXIDE.**
9. The same considerations apply at the weigh-in site as on the boat. Provide shade, oxygen, and ice for the holding tank if used and handle the fish as little as possible.

### **Optimal Release Sites**

1. Clear water
2. Hard, clean bottom
3. Away from boat traffic
4. Relatively cool water
5. Good water quality
6. Away from heavy bank/pier fishing pressure

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