



## 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

For more information, contact: Fisheries Biologist  
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources  
107 Foxwood Drive  
Farmville, VA 23901  
(434) 392-9645

Adapted from Keeping Bass Alive: A Guide for Anglers and Tournament Organizers. By Gene Gilliland & Hal Schramm. Published by ESPN Productions, Inc./B.A.S.S., 2002.

For a copy of the complete guidebook, contact: B.A.S.S. Conservation Department  
5845 Carmichael Road  
Montgomery, AL 36117  
Tel (334)272-9530  
Fax (334)270-8549  
Email: [conservation@bassmaster.com](mailto:conservation@bassmaster.com)