

Marine Mammal Handling and Release Guidelines



A Reference for Western Pacific Pelagic Longline Fisheries NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service

Keep an identification guide, paper, and a camera ready in case of a marine mammal interaction, and take photographs or video of the animal.

FOR SMALL WHALES AND DOLPHINS

1. Make sure the crew is ready to help.
2. Avoid sudden actions that may scare the animal.
3. Move the boat carefully, and stop the boat and put the transmission in neutral when the animal is close.
4. If the far side of the mainline is within reach, use gaffs to grab the line only. This will keep any remaining gear in the water from pulling on the line and the animal. Do NOT use gaffs or sharp objects to grab an animal.
5. Slowly bring the animal next to the boat.



If the animal is tangled in line:

1. Grab the far side of the mainline, and tie the line to the boat.
2. Use a long-handled line cutter to cut as much line off the animal as you can.

If the animal is hooked:

1. Use a dehooker to remove the hook.
 2. If the hook cannot be removed, use a long-handled line cutter to cut the line as close to the hook as you can.
 3. Remove as much line as possible from the animal. Do not tie the animal to the boat with ropes or other lines.
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FOR LARGE WHALES

If a large whale is alive and on the line, call the Disentanglement Hotline at 1-888-256-9840, or call the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Ch. 16 immediately for instructions.

If a large whale is dead and on the line, call the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Ch. 16 immediately for instructions.

FOR ALL WHALES AND DOLPHINS

Write down as much information as possible to describe the animal, and its injuries.

- How long was the animal?
- What did the animal look like- did it have stripes, spots, or different colors?
- Was there any fishing gear still on the animal when it was released (where, what kind, how much)?
- Did you see any tags on the animal? Can you see any letters or numbers on the tag?

After an interaction with a marine mammal, get the rest of your fishing gear out of the water. Then, record all the information about the interaction on your Marine Mammal Injury / Mortality Reporting Form, even if you had an observer onboard. Mail the form when you get to port.

If you have one marine mammal interaction, you could have another if you keep fishing in the same area. Move away from the area, and call other fishermen to warn them. If you stay in the same area, wait 2 days to set gear to avoid more interactions.