

Marine Mammal Handling and Release Guidelines

SAFETY FIRST!

Hooked or entangled marine mammals can be very powerful and unpredictable.

Small Whales and Dolphins *(such as short-finned pilot whales, false killer whales, and Risso's dolphins)*

1. Make sure the crew is ready to help, and have dehooking and line-cutting equipment available.
2. Avoid sudden actions and movements that may scare the animal.
3. Do NOT use gaffs or sharp objects to grab or hold an animal.
4. **Determine if the animal is hooked or entangled.**

If the animal is hooked:

1. Maintain tension on the line, giving the hook a chance to straighten and release the animal without the hook or trailing line attached.
2. If the hook does not straighten, use a dehooker to remove the hook.
3. If the hook is not straightened or removed, use a long-handled line cutter to cut the line as close as you can to the hook.

If the animal is entangled:

1. If the mainline and branchline are tangled around the animal, secure the far side of the mainline to the boat. This will keep any remaining gear in the water from pulling on the line and the animal.
2. Use a long-handled line cutter to cut as much line off the animal as you can.



False Killer Whale



Risso's Dolphin

Large Whales *(such as fin whales, sperm whales, and humpback whales)*

- If a large whale is alive and hooked or entangled in fishing gear, immediately call the Disentanglement Hotline at **1-888-256-9840**, or the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Ch.16 for instructions.
- Move the vessel to minimize tension on the fishing gear.
- If a large whale is dead and hooked or entangled in fishing gear, immediately call the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF Ch.16 for instructions.



Humpback Whale

For All Interactions

- **The captain must be notified to supervise the handling and release of the animal.**
- Have an identification guide, pen and paper available.
- Write down a description of the animal and its injuries (take photos if possible):
 - How long was the animal?
 - What did the animal look like? Did it have stripes, spots, or different colors?
 - Was there fishing gear on the animal when it was released? If so, where, what kind, and how much?
 - Did you see any tags on the animal? If yes, did 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 Authorization Program Mortality / Injury Reporting Form, even if you had an observer aboard. Mail the form when you get to port.

CAUTION: Whales and dolphins may become hooked or entangled by longline gear, especially while eating bait or catch. If you suspect marine mammals are eating your bait or catch, consider moving 100 kilometers / 54 nautical miles or more to reduce the chance of marine mammal interactions.

For more information, contact NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division at (808) 944-2200.

