

Turtle Handling & Release and Crew Safety

To reduce risk:

- Large circle hooks (18/0) and setting deeper (below 40m) helps to avoid interactions with turtles.
- Do not commence line setting near large congregations of marine mammals

General Pointers:

Do not land turtles on board if there is the possibility this will cause further injury and stress. Hauling animals to the deck using the line may result in increased tissue damage by the hook, possibly piercing the oesophagus or stomach or pulling organs from connective tissue and killing the animal.

Where practical use the DOC supplied line cutters to cut as much line as possible off an entangled animal or dehooking device to remove hooks from internally (e.g. throat hooked) or externally (flipper) hooked animals.

Where practical (small turtles) use dip-nets (long enough to reach the animal from the fish door) to retrieve small animals that require further treatment. For animals that can be brought aboard, land them gently to avoid damage.

If a turtle is caught by being hooked or entangled in your longline:

- If a turtle is noticed on the line, slow down to reduce trauma to the animal.
- If the turtle is too large to bring on board, bring it as close to the boat as possible without putting strain on the line – then cut the line as close to the turtle as possible. Don't jump in the water to untangle the line.
- Turtles may appear lifeless but are not necessarily dead – they may just need time on board to recover.
- If the turtle is small – use the supplied dip net to lift on board the boat. Make sure you don't use a gaff or pull on the line, or grasp the eye sockets of the turtle.
- Gently place a piece of round wood (a broom handle) in the turtle's mouth so that it cannot bite you – bites can be nasty.
- If the hook's barb is visible use bolt cutters to cut off the point. Then remove the two parts of the hook separately.
- If the hook is not visible remove as much line as possible without pulling too hard. Then cut the line close to the turtle.
- If the turtle is active then you can carefully release it after noting and recording any tag numbers
- If the turtle is not active then it may have water in its lungs. Raise the rear flippers by 20cm while it is recovering.
- Place the turtle in a shaded location on the boat. Cover the turtle's body with wet towels, avoiding the nostrils. Spray the towels with salt water, again avoiding the face.
- Keep the turtle on board for at least 4 hours. Assess its recovery – it can be released when it is lively again – this can take up to 24 hours.
- Carefully return the turtle to the water when it has recovered. Release it headfirst while the boat is stopped and the propeller stopped.
- Ensure the turtle is well clear of the boat before making way again.
- Report the turtle capture in MPI Non-Fish & Protected Species Catch Return

Turtle realise and handling equipment:

- Gloves, bolt cutters, A line cutter and Optional- A dehooker

Turtle MPI 'NFPSCR' Reporting Codes; Green turtle – *GNT* / Loggerhead Turtle – *LHT* / Leatherback turtle- *LBT*