



Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Standards Guide

Set net

What Are Seabird Bycatch Mitigation Standards?

October 2021

The seabird bycatch Mitigation Standards were developed alongside the NPOA Seabirds 2020. They document the 'best practice' mitigation methods for reducing the risk of seabird captures in New Zealand commercial fisheries. It is expected that by 2025 the majority of vessels will have a Protected Species Risk Management Plan (PSRMP) that is tailored to their operational needs and works towards achieving the best bycatch mitigation options available.

These Mitigation Standards do not replace or override any fisheries regulations, or legislation on workplace health and safety, maritime safety, or other relevant subject.



Legal Requirements

1. **Set net vessels must meet all regulations pertaining to size of mesh, the maximum soak times, maximum lengths and net prohibition areas and restrictions.**
2. **Commercial fishers must ensure that stalling does not occur while the nets are set.**

'Best Practice' Mitigation Methods

1. **Control the discharge of fish waste**
 - No discharging of fish waste immediately before or during setting.
 - During hauling, either hold or batch discharge fish waste at intervals of no less than 30 minutes.
 - During hauling, retain all used bait on board until hauling has finished.
 - Return live fish (meeting legal requirements) to the sea as soon as practicable.
 - Document a plan for fish waste discharge should there be any equipment failures. Keep a copy on board.
 - Whilst still allowing the free movement and egress of water, maintain a secondary system that prevents uncontrolled fish waste discharge (*i.e.* equipment to minimise fish waste lost to factory floor or deck, grating and/or trap systems in fish sorting and gutting areas that lead overboard).
2. **Minimise any risk due to the spatial placement of set nets**
 - Nets are not set in the vicinity of known or observed bird colonies or foraging areas (consider time of year).
 - Nets are not set in an area when there is high bird activity, such as feeding/diving. Avoid fishing in known areas where seabirds have recently been caught.
3. **Minimise any attractions or access to the set net itself**
 - Ensure all practicable stickers are removed from the net before each shot.
 - Minimise the time the net is at or near the surface of the water. Shoot and haul as quickly as practicable.
 - Ensure net is set in a way that does not risk stalling.
 - Regularly inspect and maintain gear and equipment to reduce the risk of gear failure.
 - Where possible, conduct maintenance during periods of low risk to seabirds and with the net on board.
4. **Minimise deck landings or vessel impacts by seabirds**
 - Keep additional and unnecessary deck lighting to a minimum so as not to attract or disorientate seabirds, especially while sheltering or at anchor.
 - Keep gear and deck clean of any remaining fish waste where possible.
 - Ensure crew are familiar with safe seabird handling procedures (see [DOC Handling and Release Guide](#)).

For More Information

Contact your Liaison Officer for any questions you may have. They will be working with you to try and achieve these Mitigation Standards. The full document is available on the [MPI website](#).