



MINISTRY OF FISHERIES
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa



Challenger Fishery
Management Area
(East)

Nelson

Blenheim

Make sure you know the fisheries regulations

For blue cod in the Challenger Fishery Management Area (East):

- the minimum size limit is **30cm**
- the amateur daily bag limit is **3 blue cod per person per day**
- using under-sized fish for bait is illegal - they should be returned to the water dead or alive
- no fishing is permitted in Double Bay, the Long Island Marine Reserve in Queen Charlotte Sound, and the Tonga Island Marine Reserve
- returning to the sea previously caught dead fish when bigger fish are caught is illegal.

For further information

www.fish.govt.nz

Contact local Fishery Officer

If you require further information on fishing regulations, or see someone breaking the regulations, you can contact a Fisheries Officer:

118 Vickerman St, Nelson
(03) 548 1069 (office hours)

0800 4 RULES (0800 478 537)
for information on rules

0800 4 POACHER (0800 476 224)
to report illegal fishing

www.fish.govt.nz

Sustainable fisheries within a healthy aquatic ecosystem

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October 2003

Guidelines for blue cod fishing in the Challenger Fishery Management Area (East)





Why do we need guidelines?

Blue cod is one of the most popular species for recreational fishers in the top of the South Island. Because of this blue cod stocks are under great stress. The problem is made worse because many of the under-sized fish caught while trying to catch 'the big one' die, even when they are returned to the water.

We all need to protect the small fish because they are the future breeding stock. If we reduce the number of breeding fish there will be fewer fish to replace those which are caught, and this would mean a decline in the stocks of blue cod.

Here are a few handy hints on how you can enjoy fishing for blue cod today and still help ensure there is more left for tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow!

Blue cod facts

Did you know that blue cod:

- are only found in New Zealand, where they are more common the further south you go?
- can live 17 years, reach a length of 60 cm and weigh up to 4 kgs? (wouldn't you like to catch one of these?)
- begin spawning once they reach 20-25 cm (3-5 years old)?
- are brown as juveniles? Around 20 cm they turn a mottled grey and later on a green colour. Older males are coloured blue which gives them their name.
- can change sex from females to males?

How to fish for blue cod

Lines:

- use only enough line to reach the bottom - this keeps tension on the line so you'll know when you've caught a fish
- use only one hook per line
- once you've 'hooked' a fish, check the line immediately.

Hooks

Hook type is important. Blue cod 'bite' the hook and then 'twist'. If hooks are swallowed, they are likely to damage the throat or gills, which almost certainly results in death.

To improve survival, blue cod should be hooked around the lips. To do this use:

- **Large hooks (size 6 and larger).** This is most important as large hooks catch fewer under-sized fish, are not easily swallowed, and still catch the same number of legal size blue cod.

Recommended hooks are:

- **Wide gap hooks or circle hooks** e.g. Kahle hooks.
- **Flasher rigs or jigs (one hook only).**

To further reduce hook damage to under-sized fish use:

- **Barbless hooks.** You can easily crimp the barbs on ordinary hooks with pliers or file the barbs off. Barbed hooks can tear the flesh when being removed, which can lead to infection and possibly death. Barbless hooks also add to the sport of catching fish (but make sure you keep tension on the line).

If you catch an under-sized blue cod, remember to do these things

- ✓ remove fish from the water only if you have to
- ✓ wear cotton or rubber gloves or at least wet your hands
- ✓ lie fish on a soft wet surface if you need to handle them out of the water
- ✓ minimise the time fish are out of the water
- ✓ remove the hook carefully from lip-hooked fish
- ✓ cut the line for gut-hooked fish
- ✓ return fish gently to the sea

PLEASE DO NOT

- ✗ hold fish by inserting your fingers inside the gill covers
- ✗ poke or touch the eyes, and never hold fish by the eye sockets
- ✗ use a 'gob' stick on fish you will release
- ✗ squeeze the gill covers or gut area hard
- ✗ lift fish by the tail as this can dislocate the spine
- ✗ drop or place fish on a hot, dry deck or on rocks

If you are on a jetty or the side of the boat is too far above the water you can use a bucket of water to lower the fish down. Another good way is to use a length of wet PVC pipe. Submerge one end and slide the fish down into the water.

These methods are particularly useful when shags are feeding nearby. By releasing under-sized blue cod under the water you reduce their chances of being eaten by shags.

Wide Gap Hook

