

Help to ensure a sustainable fishery

The Marlborough Sounds blue cod fishery is iconic to many Kiwis. However, recent surveys have shown that it is not doing so well.

Key issues include:

- high fishing pressure, particularly over summer;
- mortality of released cod from handling and predation;
- a lack of big females which has limited spawning;
- environmental stressors such as sedimentation;
- low abundance, especially the inner Sounds.

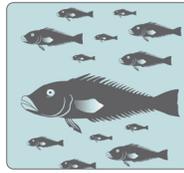
Fisheries New Zealand has recently consulted on proposed measures to address this. More information can be found at fisheries.govt.nz/bluecodreview or by scanning the QR code.



In the meantime, you can do your bit to minimise your impact on the fishery by:

- **checking and sticking to the rules**, by downloading the free NZ Fishing Rules app (see the back page of this brochure);
- **following advice in this guide** to give released fish the best chance of survival;
- **learning about the state of the fishery and considering targeting other species instead**. Gurnard, snapper, kahawai, and kingfish stocks are much healthier and can be caught away from reefs and rocky margins.

Avoiding small cod



Be intentional in your fishing

Before you head out, think about what species you are targeting, where you might find them, and what gear you need. Ask your local fishing shop for advice.



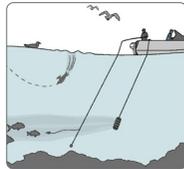
Use the right hook

Use a large circle hook in blue cod habitat, as these are less likely to catch or be swallowed by small cod. Refer to the **What hook to use?** section.

If you keep catching small fish, move on.

Some spots are juvenile nurseries or heavily fished, so few big cod are there. If you keep catching small cod, move on.

Avoiding birds including shags



Try not to catch-and-release fish

The best way to protect fish from predation is to not catch them. Use the right gear and move if not catching what you're fishing for.



Minimise attractants

Keep your boat clean, don't gut fish while fishing, and get any burley down quickly. Putting fish waste in covered bins helps.



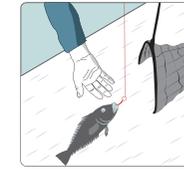
Try a return device or other tricks

A length of downpipe, a descender weight, or a splash to distract shags can give the cod a chance to get to the seafloor.

If you can't avoid the birds, move on.

Don't make the problem worse – try somewhere else.

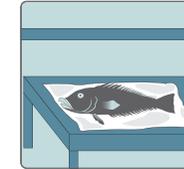
Handling for release



Keep fish in the water if you can

This greatly reduces stress to the fish. If you need to bring fish on board to remove the hook, use a knotless or rubber net.

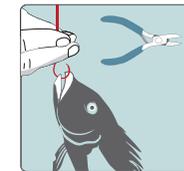
Don't lift gill or gut-hooked fish by the line.



Put fish on a wet surface if onboard

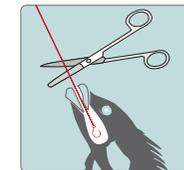
Wet your hands before handling fish. Lay it down on a smooth wet surface in the shade, as gently as possible.

Dry surfaces remove the fish's protective mucus layer, increasing risk of infection.



Getting the hook out

Remove the hook gently from mouth-hooked fish, by pushing the hook back the way it came. If it is difficult to do this by hand, use pliers to get a better grip.



Cut the line for gut-hooked fish

If a fish is gut-hooked always cut the line (as close as you can to the mouth), as it is likely to die if you try to remove the hook.



Return to the sea quickly and gently

Minimise the time fish are out of the water and return them to the sea gently, head first and from the lowest possible height.

Never hold live fish by the gills or eyes. Lifting by the tail can dislocate the spine.

What hook to use?

Good



- Use 6/0 or larger circle, recurve, or kahle style hooks to avoid small fish and gut-hooking.
- Jigs also work well, but regardless of hook, it is important to keep your line tight and fish actively.
- Flattened barbs make it easier to get the hook out.

Avoid

- Small (<6/0) “J” or “beak” style hooks.
- Multiple hooks on one line.
- Hooks with offsets and barbs, as these can make hook removal difficult and cause more damage.

In summary

We all want a sustainable fishery for future generations to enjoy. You can do your bit by remembering to:

- Be intentional about your fishing, by picking a target species, and gear and area accordingly. **If you're not targeting blue cod, don't fish over rocky margins.**
- **Use the right hook** to avoid having to return small cod or gut-hooking ones you don't want.
- Try to **remove hooks with the fish in the water**. Otherwise use a wet, shady surface, a gentle touch, and minimise handling time.
- **Move if you are catching lots of small fish, or birds become an issue. Stop fishing once you've caught what you want to keep.**

Fishing rules at your fingertips

New Zealand's fishing rules and restrictions change regularly. Check the rules each time you go fishing or gather seafood.

- Download the **free NZ Fishing Rules app**. Scan the QR code or text 'app' to 9889. The app works when there's no phone coverage.



- Check the rules at fisheries.govt.nz/rules
- Follow a regional **MPI Fisheries Facebook page** or email recreationalfisheries@mpi.govt.nz for local updates.
- Freephone **0800 00 83 33** to find a local Fisheries New Zealand office.

*Only take what you need for a feed.
Protect our kaimoana for future generations.*



Marlborough Sounds Blue Cod Responsible Fishing Guidelines

