

## Why good netting matters

Set netting is a common fishing method used in New Zealand. Used responsibly, set nets can be a very effective and efficient fishing method. However, poor netting practices pose a risk to the marine environment through bycatch of unwanted fish species; lost or abandoned nets continuing to catch fish; or by accidentally catching seabirds or marine mammals.

To help reduce waste and keep our fisheries sustainable it is important that set nets are used properly. The guidelines in this brochure work with set netting rules to encourage fishers to fish in a safe and responsible way.

This brochure contains overall set net guidelines only. Different areas have local fishing rules including closed areas and seasonal restrictions. Set net use can be restricted by Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) or by regional councils. Check for local rules on both the Fisheries New Zealand website ([fisheries.govt.nz/rules](http://fisheries.govt.nz/rules)) and with your local council before setting your net.

This brochure contains guidelines to best practice when using set nets. Use of set nets is prohibited around much of the South Island's coast, and on the North Island's west coast as part of a number of rules in place to protect Hector's and Māui dolphins. Fishing, including use of set nets, is also prohibited in marine reserves. There may be seasonal and local rules relating to how and where set nets can be used. Check the rules for the place you intend to fish before you go fishing.

In areas where netting is permitted fisheries regulations set general restrictions around how nets are used. These are summarised later in this brochure.

## Using the right net

The catch and bycatch of set nets is determined mainly by; the design and construction of the net (particularly the mesh size), how it is set, and where it is set. It is important to use a net designed for the fish you are targeting.

Each of the major fish species that can be taken by set net has a specific type of net that should be used. If you are not familiar with set netting, please seek advice before purchasing or constructing a net.

### Net design and construction

Nets for use in harbours and estuaries are usually made of light materials with an appropriate mesh size for the species of fish. These nets should not be used in an open coastal environment.

Nets intended for exposed waters are more strongly constructed and better suited to these conditions.

### Minimum mesh sizes

Each of the major fisheries targeted by set net fishers has a regulated mesh size based on the size, biological characteristics, and shape of each fish species. Check the fishing rules for your region to find the correct mesh size for the species you wish to target. When buying a net, make sure you specify what species you will be fishing for.

## Bagging the net

An effective technique for targeting species that swim close to the bottom is 'bagging' the net. To do this you should use ties to secure the headline of the net to the lead line at a height of approximately 30cm. By doing this at regular intervals along the net the meshes will form a 'bag' on the seabed which can increase catch rates while helping reduce unwanted bycatch. Alternatively use low, loosely slung nets which are made of light materials.

## Anchors

Use anchors that are designed for the conditions.

- Concrete blocks, bricks, or sash weights will not hold in even a moderate current and should never be used in these conditions.
- The anchor bridle should be weaker than all other ropes so that if it becomes fouled, the anchor can break free from the net.
- Some fishers find it helpful to use grapnel anchors with prongs that can straighten and release with a strong pull.
- Anchors should weigh 1kg per 10m of net, e.g. a 60m net would have a 6kg anchor at each end.
- Nets cannot be staked.

## Buoys

Use proper buoys.

- Use only purpose-designed floats that can be clearly seen at a distance. Plastic bottles, oil cans, etc, are not suitable as they can be easily damaged and sink.

- A buoy should be large enough to float on the surface even in a strong tide, but not so buoyant as to lift and move the net.

- Buoy ropes should be of sufficient length to cope with variations in water depths due to tidal change or swell. Ensure that you have sufficient length of buoy line to recover your net if it is swept into deeper water.

## Setting the net

### Set your net where it can safely fish and be recovered

If you are unfamiliar with the area, seek the advice of experienced local fishers. They can give you advice about the area and any potential difficulties for set netting. You should also check your local fishing rules for closures or restrictions.

Always check the weather and tides before you set your net. Unexpected weather changes can make it unsafe or impossible to retrieve your net. Do not set your net if the conditions could cause the net to be lost.

Do not set your net in areas with fast currents, such as the entrance to harbours or river mouths, where it could be swept away. Where there is a moderate current, set the net with, rather than across the flow.

Stay near the net (preferably within sight) so that you can attend to it if conditions deteriorate. If you do not remain with your net, make sure that you remember its exact location.

Do not set your net in areas where there are large amounts of weed, jellyfish, or logs floating in the water. These can clog the net and result in it being carried away by the tide.

## Respect other people and wildlife

Do not set your net in boating channels or attach it to navigation signs, beacons, or buoys. Avoid sites commonly used for other recreational activities such as wind surfing or swimming.

Avoid setting your net in areas where marine mammals and seabirds are present.

If you do catch any protected wildlife by accident:

- Release it immediately, taking care not to harm it.
- Stop fishing or move your net well away from the area you were fishing to avoid any further harm.
- Report the accidental capture to a Department of Conservation Ranger (0800 362 468) or a Fisheries New Zealand Fishery Officer (0800 476 224) as soon as possible.

## Set your net below the low tide line

It is illegal to set a net where it can lie exposed and stranded at low tide. Any fish exposed to the air will quickly deteriorate or be eaten by scavengers. Do not set your net in the inter-tidal zone unless you remain near the net or use a short soak time.

## Avoid setting on reefs

It is likely that you will lose or damage your net if you set it over "foul ground" or rocky reefs (areas with seaweed). Many of the reef species that may be taken in these areas are not commonly eaten and may be wasted.

Experience is essential before set netting around rocky coastlines. In these places you should set your net between the kelp and as close to a right angle with the shore as possible.

Be aware that certain reef fish, such as red moki, are slow growing and live in the same area throughout their life. A reef stripped of its resident fish can take a long time to recover.

## Fishing with your net

### Use the shortest net and largest mesh that is practical

The law defines the maximum length and the minimum mesh sizes you can use for each type of net. Larger meshes will allow juvenile fish and non-target species to escape more easily. Short nets are easier to recover and, if properly set, can be effective in catching fish. They also help to ensure that you stay within your bag limit.

### Stay near your net

Responsible set net fishers remain near their net and check it at frequent intervals. If you are near your net you are better able to respond quickly to changing conditions. This is particularly important when deteriorating weather conditions make it difficult to retrieve the net.

## Short fishing times are better

A short soak time reduces the possibility of damage or waste to the fish caught and reduces the chance of being caught out by the weather. In addition unwanted or undersized fish as well as birds or marine mammals will have a greater chance of being released alive and unharmed if they are unintentionally caught.

## Avoid overnight set netting in certain areas

Avoid set netting overnight, especially in areas where it is difficult to retrieve your net if conditions deteriorate. There is a much greater risk of the loss of nets and fish wastage during overnight setting because of the long fishing times involved.

If you do fish in the dark, set the net for the shortest practical period.

## Recovering your net

Take care when hauling your net.

When retrieving your net do not wear loose clothing which may get caught up in the net. Ensure that your boat has no projections that could catch the net and cause a capsize. You should also haul (and set) your net over the windward side of the boat and bow first. These techniques will reduce the possibility of losing control of the net or entangling the propeller.

## Build up experience

Seek advice from experienced fishers and people with local knowledge before setting your own net.

## Lost nets

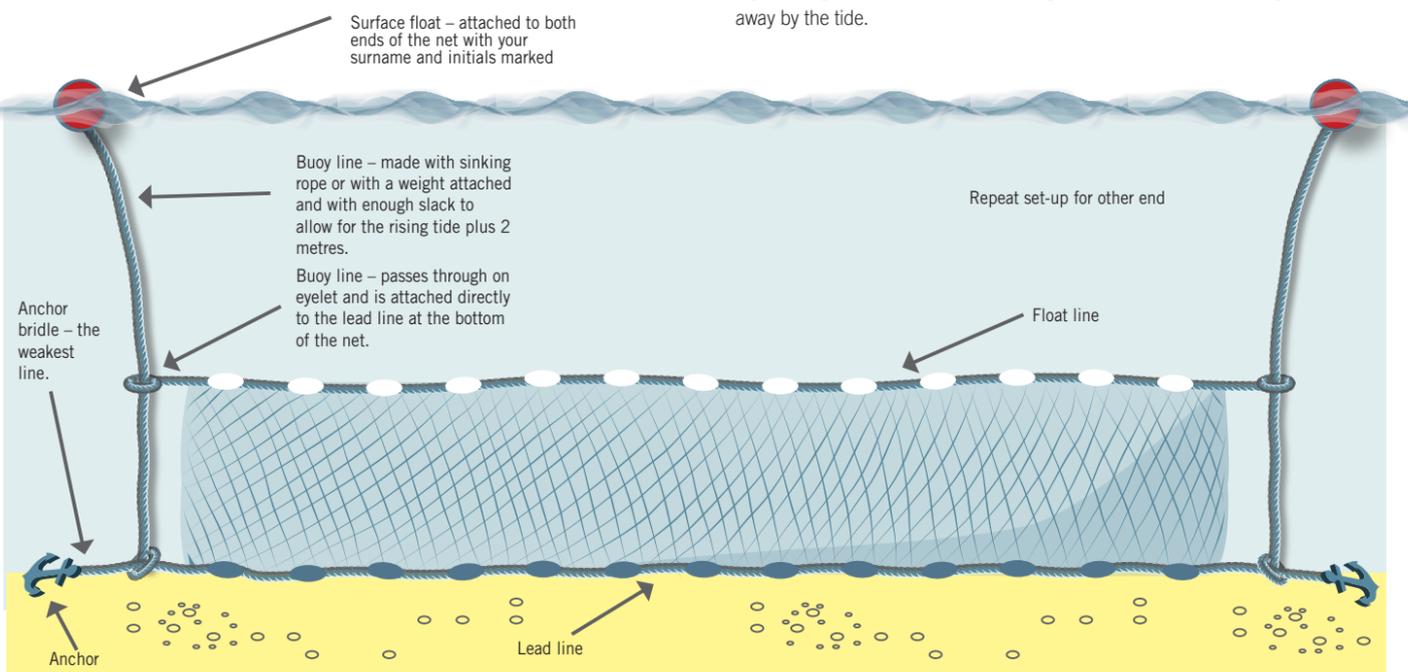
You should always attempt to recover a lost net if it can be done safely.

Try to recover a lost net by grapneling for it with an anchor. If you are unsuccessful, take bearings or a GPS mark to remember the location or drop an anchor buoy to accurately mark the spot.

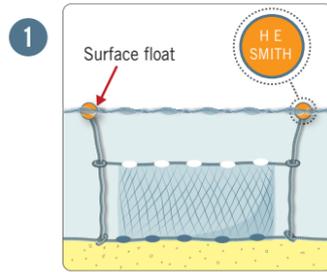
Report the location of the lost net to your local Fisheries New Zealand office.

## Fish handling tips

If you need to bring the fish on-board, use a knotless or rubberised net. Make sure the fish is supported at all times. Return to the sea quickly and gently. Minimise the time the fish is out of the water and always return fish back to the sea gently, head first and from the lowest possible height.

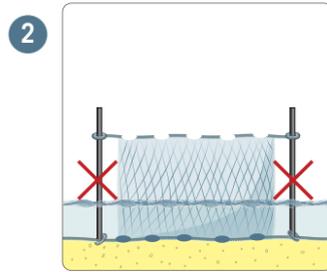


## Set net laws



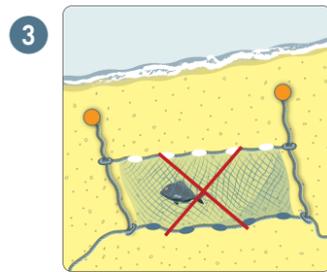
**1 Set nets must be marked.** Set nets must have a surface float at each end, these must be clearly and legibly marked with the fishers last name and initials. A phone number is also recommended in case the net is lost.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



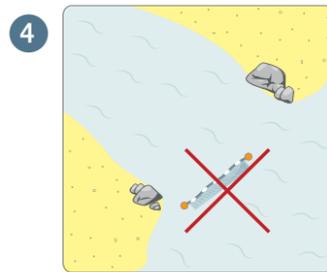
**2 Staking of nets is prohibited.** Suitable anchors and floats must be used to deploy a set net. The use of stakes or poles to hold a net in position is illegal and may result in the net being seized.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



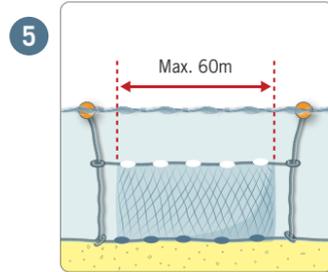
**3 Stalling of nets is prohibited.** Nets must not be used in a way that allows fish to be stranded in the net by the falling tide. This is illegal and allows scavengers to get to fish in the net.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



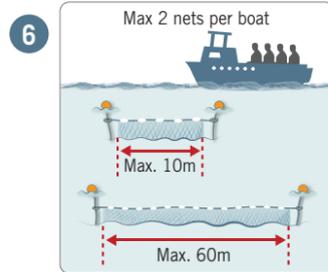
**4 Restrictions on nets in channels.** No net (either used alone or with other nets) can be set more than a quarter of the way across a channel, bay or waterway.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



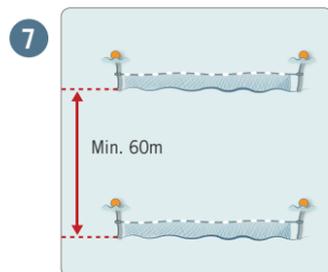
**5 Set nets must be less than 60m in length.** No person may use or possess a set net that is more than 60m in length. Drag nets may only be 40m in length.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



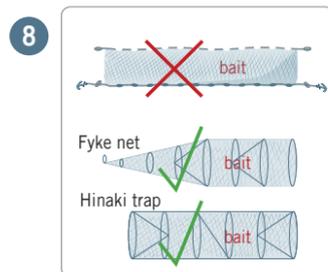
**6 Max of two nets per person or vessel, provided one is less than 10m long.** The maximum number of nets that can be used from a boat is two. The second net may only be used if it is less than 10m long and has a mesh size of less than 50mm.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



**7 Nets must be more than 60m apart.** A person may not set any set net within 60m of another net.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**



**8 Using baited nets is prohibited.** No person may possess or use a baited net, other than a fyke net or hinaki trap.

**Penalty: \$250 Infringement (or prosecution up to \$10,000).**

## A guide to the law

This is a summary of the amateur fishing laws of New Zealand as they relate to set net fishing. If you do not read English, have someone translate this summary for you. These laws are subject to change at any time and without prior notice. There are heavy penalties for breaching these laws.

He whakarāpopototanga tēnei o ngā ture o Aotearoa e pā ana ki ngā mahi hī ika mō te taha ki te hī ika takakau. Mehemea kāore koe i te mōhio ki te kōrero Pākehā, kāti tikina tētahi tangata hei whakamāori i te pānui nei. Tērā ka whakarekēhia ngā ture nei ahakoa he aha te wā, ā, kāore e pānuitia i te tuatahi. Ka utaina he whiu taumaha ki runga i ngā tāngata e whawhati ana i ngā ture nei.

E akamāramarama'anga teia tei atu potō'ia no runga i te au ture tautai amatua o Niu Tirenī (koia oki, te tautai, kare koe e tutaki'ia no te rave'anga i te reira) no runga i te tautai pae tarekareka me kare pae tamataora. Mei te mea e, kare koe e mārāma i te tatau i te reo Papāa, kia patī koe i tetai tangata kia uri atu i teia akamāramarama'anga tei atu potō'ia ki roto i toou uaorai reo. Ka rauka ua teia au ture nei kia tau'i'ia i tetai ua atu tuātau, e ma te kare te reira tau'i'anga e akakite'ia atu na mua. E au utunga pakari tikai tei akono'ia na tei aati i teia au ture nei.

Ko e tau talahauaga fakaku a nei hāgaao ke he tau tagata fa o futiika ke kai na lautolu ni (amateur) mo e tau mata fakatufono ne fakatokatoka. Ka nakai maeke ia koe ke totou Palagi, ti moua taha tagata ke totou mo e fakamaama atu kia koe e talahauaga ku nei. Ko e tau mata fakatufono nei to huihui he ha magaaoho ka e nakai fai fakailoaga ke he heagaapi. Kua mamafa lahi e tau fakahala ke he tau tagata ka holia e tau mata fakatufono nei.

Ko ha fakamatala fakanounou 'eni 'o e ngaahi lao ki he toutai 'amatua 'i Nu'u Silā 'i he 'enau fekau'aki mo e toutai va'ingā. Kapau 'oku 'ikai te ke lava 'o lautohi faka-Pilitānia, 'oange 'a e fakamatalā ni ki ha taha ke ne fakatonu atu. ' E lava ke liliu 'a e ngaahi laō ni 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pē pea ta'e fai mu'omu'a ha fakatokanga. 'Oku 'i ai ha ngaahi tautea mamafa 'o ka maumau' i 'a e ngaahi laō ni.

O faamatalaga 'oto'oto nei ua patino i tulāfono a Niu Sila mo faiva fagota faasamasamanoa e pei take out 'le' le faiva fagota tafafao.

Afai e te lē iloa faitau le gagana faa-Peretania, tapa ane i se isi na te faaliliuina nei faamatalaga 'oto'oto mo 'oe. Ua mafai ona suia nei tulāfono i soo se taimi e aunoa ma ni lapata'iga. Ua iai ni faasalaga mamafa e oo iai pe afai e solliina nei tulāfono.

這是和娛樂性釣魚有關的紐西蘭業餘釣魚法概要。如果你不懂得英文，請他人為您翻譯此文。該項法令隨時變更且不會預先通知。違法者將處以重罰。

Đây là bản tóm tắt các đạo luật đánh cá cho những người đánh cá không chuyên nghiệp liên quan đến việc đánh cá để giải trí. Nếu bạn không đọc được tiếng Anh thì bạn hãy nhờ người khác dịch bản tóm tắt này cho bạn. Các luật này có thể thay đổi bất cứ lúc nào mà không báo trước. Nếu bạn vi phạm các đạo luật này bạn sẽ bị trừng phạt.

## Poacher prevention

Fisheries New Zealand's Compliance Team is responsible for protecting local fisheries and stopping illegal activities such as poaching.

If you see people acting illegally, taking more than their daily limit or undersized fish or selling or trading their catch, please report it. Any information provided stays completely confidential.

**Report poaching, suspicious or illegal activity – call 0800 4 POACHER (0800 476 224).**

## New Zealand's fishing rules at your fingertips

This brochure is a guide only and may not include all local restrictions and rules or any changes made since it was printed. To keep up to date, check the rules each time you fish. For up to date information about closures and restrictions please download the NZ Fishing Rules app. It is illegal to sell or trade your catch.

## Check the rules

### Check the rules using our FREE app

Download our free NZ Fishing Rules app by scanning the QR code or visiting the app store. The app works even when you have no coverage.



### Other services

- Free text the name of the species you are fishing for (e.g. kahawai or kina) to **9889** and receive a text with the legal size and bag limit.
- Visit [www.fisheries.govt.nz/rules](http://www.fisheries.govt.nz/rules)
- Email [recreationalfisheries@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:recreationalfisheries@mpi.govt.nz) to subscribe to fishing related updates in your area.
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- MPI Fisheries – Canterbury/Westland
- MPI Fisheries – Otago/Southland

**Contact us 0800 00 83 33**

SEPT2024

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Government

## Code of Practice for Set Net Fishing



Effective from September 2024 (subject to change without notice).



**Want the rules on your phone?**  
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