

# Surface Longline Operational Procedures - Protected Species Risk Management

Version 3 December 2021

**FISHERIES**  
INSHORE NEW ZEALAND

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**Disclaimer:** *These OPs do not replace or override any fisheries legislation or other regulations including Health & Safety, Maritime Safety, Fisheries, Animal Welfare or the Wildlife Act. Vessel operators are required to ensure that both they and their crew understand all regulations that are relevant to the fisheries and environment that they are operating in, and that crew and vessel safety must always be considered.*

**MPI has stated that at-sea inspections will become more directed as a result of the availability of GPR data. Make sure you know what you need to meet legal requirements on protected species mitigation measures and reporting. Please contact your Liaison Officer for support if you need assistance.**

## 1. Background, Rationale and Purpose

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Surface longline (SLL) vessels operate in areas overlapping with marine protected species, particularly seabirds. In addition to seabirds, the SLL fleet has observed captures of other protected species including turtles, sharks and less commonly marine mammals. It is therefore important to use a structured approach to mitigate the risk of protected species captures in the fishery.

The protected species caught by the SLL fleet are of significant importance to the community and some are rare (*i.e.* have very small and/or threatened populations). The Government will be responsive in ensuring that undue impacts are not occurring on these species. It is in the best interests of the SLL fleet to take all reasonable steps to understand, acknowledge and mitigate impacts on protected wildlife encountered.

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### National Plan of Action - Seabirds and Risk Assessment

The National Plan of Action (NPOA) Seabirds focuses on education, partnering to find innovative solutions to bycatch mitigation, and ensuring that all fishers know how, and are taking all practicable steps, to avoid seabird bycatch. The NPOA sets out objectives for the next five years to guide management of risk to by-caught seabirds in New Zealand fisheries. This management comes mostly from Fisheries New Zealand (FNZ) with support from the Department of Conservation (DOC) and industry bodies such as Fisheries Inshore NZ (FINZ), Southern Inshore Fisheries Management Co. (SIFMC) and the DeepWater Group (DWG).

The New Zealand seabird risk assessment is the main way FNZ evaluates the impact of commercial fisheries on New Zealand seabirds. The assessment incorporates spatial overlap of seabird populations and fishing effort, as well as population size and productivity to determine each species' risk category. A key part of the NPOA Seabirds is the objective to decrease the number of fishing-related seabird mortalities and show a reduction in their risk ratios, so that populations can recover and stabilise.

Currently 13 seabirds are assessed to be in a risk category that warrants prompt and considered attention. Of particular concern to the inshore SLL fleet are black petrels, flesh-footed shearwaters, Wandering (Antipodean and Gibson's) albatross, and Salvin's albatross.

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### National Plan of Action - Sharks and Risk Assessment

Similarly to seabirds, NZ's shark species are included under a 'NPOA – Sharks' that documents NZ's planned actions for conservation and management of those species. Several sharks and rays are also protected under NZ legislation and some of those may be encountered when fishing in your region. There are increasing numbers of turtle's captures being reported by the SLL fleet too. **While other protected species (sharks, turtles and marine mammals) are caught by this fleet, seabirds are currently at the highest risk to SLL fishing, therefore this document focuses on seabird capture mitigation, regulations and techniques.**

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### Purpose

This Operational Procedure (OP) has been established so that agreed and required management measures are clearly communicated to and understood by vessel skippers, managers, and annual catch entitlement (ACE) providers/Licensed Fish Receivers (LFRs).

This OP aligns with the 'Mitigation Standards to Reduce the Incidental Captures of Seabirds in New Zealand Commercial Fisheries (Toolbox of Measures)' developed by DOC and FNZ. The Mitigation Standards builds on existing statutory requirements to show bycatch mitigation options that are above and beyond minimum regulations. The fishing industry focuses on ensuring our fleets are meeting statutory requirements and encourages vessels to further reduce their risk of seabird captures, as appropriate to their vessel operations.

The purpose of the inshore SLL Operational Procedures is to ensure:

- The risk of seabird mortalities from longlining is mitigated and seabird captures are reduced.
  - All mandatory measures are understood and adhered to.
  - Vessel skipper and crews are aware of additional, voluntary measures that go above and beyond statutory requirements.
  - Vessels report as required and as accurately as possible all capture events (FNZ reporting) as well as any event triggers required by the Protected Species Liaison Programme.
  - Vessel crews actively implement protected species mitigation measures *i.e.* **Look – Think – Act.**
  - Vessel skippers and crew are aware of systems to manage protected species risk and can stand up to audit or review by vessel owners, skippers or Government.
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## 2. Main seabird species at risk

Species at Risk	Species Code	Main Risk Area	Threat Classification, Risk Profile, Time, Place
Black Petrel	XBP	East Coast North Island (Particularly FMA 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Highest risk seabird in FNZ Risk Assessment</b></li> <li>• <i>Nationally Critical</i></li> <li>• <b>Highest risk during breeding season (Oct-May)</b></li> <li>• Nests on Great Barrier Island and Little Barrier Island</li> <li>• <b>Jan-Feb</b>, forage around breeding islands, North Cape to HG, out to the shelf and down to BOP</li> <li>• <b>Mar-May</b>, forage close to breeding islands, North Cape to HG and offshore Coromandel</li> <li>• Aggressive feeder near nest sites, boat positive, strong diver</li> </ul>
Flesh-footed shearwater	XFS	East Coast North Island (particularly FMA 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Third highest risk seabird in FNZ Risk Assessment</b></li> <li>• <i>Nationally Vulnerable</i></li> <li>• <b>High risk period between Dec-May</b></li> <li>• Nests on many out-lying islands around upper North Island</li> <li>• Previous captures focused North Cape to BOP, with some captures observed from Lachlan Banks area and Taranaki</li> <li>• Aggressive Feeder, strong diver and forages during daylight hours</li> </ul>
Salvin's albatross	XPB	All Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Second highest risk seabird in FNZ Risk Assessment</b></li> <li>• <i>Nationally Critical</i></li> <li>• During breeding season (Aug-Apr) found across NZ, particularly in the Cook Strait</li> <li>• <b>Higher risk in North Island Sep-Mar</b></li> <li>• Aggressive surface feeder (fish, squid, krill, offal), boat positive but rarely plunge or dives</li> </ul>
Wandering albatross (Gibson's and Antipodean)	XAG	East Coast North Island (particularly FMA1) and Kermadec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nationally Critical</i></li> <li>• Pelagic boat positive foragers</li> <li>• <b>Forage on upwelling areas &amp; features</b> - overlap where deepwater occurs close to land <i>i.e.</i> East Cape, Kaikoura, Cook Strait/Wairarapa, Three Kings and Fiordland</li> <li>• Nest on Antipodean, Campbell and Auckland Islands, most common in Tasman Sea and over Chatham Rise</li> </ul>
NZ White-capped Albatross		All Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Declining</i> - main threat is fisheries bycatch</li> <li>• During breeding season (Nov-Jun) they occur all around NZ, particularly Cook Strait and south</li> <li>• After breeding season most birds remain in Australasian waters</li> <li>• Aggressive surface feeder (fish, squid, krill, offal), boat positive but rarely plunge or dive</li> </ul>
Westland Petrel		All Areas, particularly West Coast South Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Naturally Uncommon</i></li> <li>• Commonly seen east coast South Island, Cook Strait, Chatham Rise south to Fiordland and Stewart Island</li> <li>• Rarely north of Cape Egmont and East Cape</li> <li>• <b>During Mar-Nov range over shelf waters (&lt;800m depths) during breeding season</b></li> <li>• Migrate to South America during non-breeding periods</li> <li>• Boat positive foragers, particularly in tuna longlining</li> </ul>

### 3. Other protected species at risk

Species at Risk	Species Code	Main Risk Area	Threat Classification, Risk Profile, Time, Place
Leatherback Turtle	LBT	All areas, particularly East Coast North Island, Kermadecs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Leatherback</b> – <i>Critically Endangered</i>, pelagic forager commonly sighted in northern NZ during summer months, has been sighted in South Island too</li> <li>• <b>Green</b> – <i>Endangered</i>, spring/summer in upper North Island</li> <li>• <b>Loggerhead</b> – occasional visitors found around upper North Island but sighted as far south as Stewart Island</li> <li>• <b>Hawksbill</b> – tropical species, rare visitors to NZ waters, mostly seen upper North Island, on continental shelf but sighted as far south as the Cook Strait</li> <li>• <b>Olive Ridley</b> – rarely seen in NZ but has been sighted around North Island</li> </ul>
Green Turtle	GNT		
Loggerhead, Hawksbill & Olive Ridley	TLE		
Spine-tailed devil ray	MJA	All areas, particularly East Coast North Island, Kermadecs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrate to northern NZ waters (east and west coasts) during spring and summer</li> <li>• Predominantly pelagic (in water deeper than 200m) but do occur coastally</li> <li>• Look very similar to Manta Rays and often misidentified</li> <li>• Little is known of their biology in NZ waters</li> <li>• Susceptible to fishing pressure due to being slow growing/slow to mature, low numbers of eggs e.g. 1/year</li> </ul>
Dusky Dolphin	DDO	All Areas, particularly East Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Not Threatened</i></li> <li>• Found in large groups around the coastline of NZ, but more so on the East Coast (generally &lt;2000m deep)</li> <li>• Forage offshore at night on anchovies, hake and squid</li> </ul>
Common Dolphin	CDO	All Areas, particularly East Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Not Threatened</i></li> <li>• Commonly found in large groups offshore NZ year-round, particularly in warm-temperate waters</li> <li>• Forages on squid and small schooling fish</li> <li>• In spring often associated with Pilot, Bryde's and Sei whales</li> </ul>
Bottlenose Dolphin	BDO	All Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Range Restricted</i></li> <li>• A pod of ~450 range between Doubtless Bay (Northland) and Tauranga</li> <li>• Another pod ranges from Marlborough Sounds to Westport</li> <li>• Feed on mid-water fish and oceanic squid</li> <li>• Commonly associated with pilot whales, rough-toothed and Risso's dolphins, and humpback whales</li> </ul>
NZ Fur Seal	FUR	All Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Not Threatened</i></li> <li>• Present year-round on entire NZ Coastline, mainly rocky shores</li> <li>• Forage both nearshore and offshore (down to 200m deep) on squid and small mid-water fish</li> <li>• Also known to forage off the continental shelf</li> </ul>

## 4. Managing the main risks associated with the SLL fishery

RISK ITEM	WAYS TO MANAGE RISK
<p><b>Food Attractant</b></p> <p>Offal, waste, discarded baits, whole fish returned to the sea, whole fish on the line.</p> <p>The more food, the more birds around the vessel, increasing the risk of captures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stopping or controlling (batching) offal/waste discharge immediately before or during setting and hauling lines.</li> <li>• If batching cannot occur then discharging any attractant on the other side from which the hauling station is located.</li> <li>• If hauling over the stern, discard used baits, offal, waste and live fish in batches on the leeward side of the vessel.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Baited Hooks - Setting</b></p> <p>Predominantly beak hooked, foul hooked, or entangled in the line.</p> <p>Poorly designed or deployed tori line increases the risk.</p> <p>Poor sink rate (the longer the hook is on or near the surface) increases the risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a tori line(s) to deter seabirds from accessing baits (unless hook pods are used on 100% of hooks).</li> <li>• Use appropriate line weighting to ensure a sink rate that mitigates the risk to diving birds (locating weights closer to hooks can help).</li> <li>• Slow the vessel or free-spool the drum to let the line sink faster if possible.</li> <li>• Set at night to reduce visibility of gear to seabirds (can also use blue-dyed bait).</li> <li>• Avoid setting the line when large numbers of birds or marine mammals are present.</li> <li>• While ensuring vessel &amp; crew safety, reduce additional &amp; unnecessary lighting on the vessel to the minimum.</li> <li>• Use thawed bait rather than frozen bait that floats (take out of freezer or ice several hours before setting).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Baited Hooks - Hauling</b></p> <p>Predominantly beak hooked, foul hooked or bird entangled in the line.</p> <p>Risk increases the longer the hook is on or near the surface, made worse by a slow retrieval rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a bird exclusion or scaring device at the hauling station (<i>i.e.</i> hose spray, mitigation devices and/or vessel manoeuvres).</li> <li>• Haul as quickly as practicable.</li> <li>• Ensure line weighting is appropriate and floats are hauled in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Ensure vessel is moving at an appropriate speed to keep the line underwater.</li> <li>• Avoid hauling the line when large numbers of birds or marine mammals are present.</li> <li>• While ensuring vessel &amp; crew safety, reduce additional &amp; unnecessary lighting on the vessel to the minimum possible</li> </ul>
<p><b>High Risk Periods and Areas</b></p> <p>Increased seabird numbers and aggressive feeding during breeding season, migration periods and/or moon periods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid setting on a full moon and three days either side when possible.</li> <li>• Increase sink rate (<i>e.g.</i> weight and/or remove floats, and/or reduce setting speed (noting reduced setting speed may mean adjusting tori line drag to maintain aerial extent).</li> <li>• Add another streamer line,</li> <li>• Move from the fishing area, particularly move away from nesting areas.</li> <li>• While ensuring vessel &amp; crew safety, reduce additional &amp; unnecessary lighting on the vessel to the minimum (particularly if at anchor).</li> </ul>

## 5. Mitigation Measures

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FNZ has implemented regulatory requirements for seabird risk mitigation. You should have a full copy of the regulations onboard and understand them. The regulations that apply are: *Fisheries (Seabird Mitigation Measures – Surface Longlines) Circular 2019* - <https://gazette.govt.nz/notice/id/2020-go30>.

### In summary,

**Tori (streamer) lines:** If hook-shielding devices are not used, tori lines must be deployed during setting (day and night) and meet design specifications.

**Night setting:** SLL vessels must set only at night unless line weighting is employed, or hook-shielding devices are used.

**Line weighting:** Line weighting is required for day setting, unless hook shielding devices are used.

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### 5a. Mandatory Tori Lines requirements

Tori lines are regarded as one of the most effective mitigation tools. **All longline vessels 7m or longer in LOA must deploy a tori line during all setting events.**

#### **Tori line requirements for vessels under 35m LOA:**

- The tori line must achieve a minimum aerial extent of 75m .
- The tori line must be attached at a point at least 6m above the waterline (as close to the stern as possible).
- The streamers must be brightly coloured, be spaced a maximum of 1m apart, and extend along the aerial extent of the line,
  - Short streamers must be at least 1m in length and must be attached no further than 1m apart along aerial section,
  - Long streamers (must be long enough to reach the surface of the sea in calm conditions) must be attached at intervals of no more than 5m apart along at least the first 75m of the streamer line.
- Streamers may be modified in the first 15m of streamer section to minimise risk of entanglement.
- If the tori line is damaged/broken during setting, stop set until it's repaired and or deploy another line.

#### **5b. Best operational design guide to achieve at least 75m of aerial extent:**

1. Vessel attachment: place as high as possible above the waterline (recommended **at least 8m or more**).
  - Crew must be able to adjust or move the tori line or use a bridle to place the tori line in the best spot relative to fishing gear.
  - A proper pole or attachment point is essential.
  - Fit a breakaway (weak link) so if a tangle occurs the tori line breaks at the weak spot, then there is no damage to other gear.
  - Have a lazy line back to deck so you regain the vessel end of the tori line and retrieve it.
2. Streamer aerial section: backbone of the tori line with streamer of a minimum length of 1m be spaced at no more than 1m intervals:
  - Depending on height (off water) of the streamer line, reduce length of each streamer by approximately 30-50cm going down the backbone.
  - Once deployed (without the setting gear) the first time, trim long streamers to stay just above the water to reduce drag, tangling gear, and birds (*i.e.* so streamers are in the air not in the water).
3. Drag section; can be either a float(s) or rope or mono.
  - There is no minimum or maximum length the drag rope or object can be other than you must achieve 75m aerial in your streamer section.
  - If the vessel is under 20m, recommended is 80 m to 100m long with either rope, float (or both) or mono for drag. For vessels over 20m length, the whole tori line must be 150m long.
  - Adjust tori line to best suit weather, gear and processing conditions to minimise risk during periods of high seabird interactions.



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4. **Tangling:** Tori lines if not deployed or adjusted correctly often tangle with setting gear. To reduce this maintain height separation for as long as possible between the tori line and setting gear:
- Fix the tori line as high as possible to vessel (every 1m height will give you 8-10m more aerial extent).
  - Increase the drag (most tori lines don't have enough drag) by increasing size, length or weight of drag object or object needs to be attached so its streamline with no catch-points for the setting gear to 'grab'.
  - Keep streamers out of the water. Only the last section of the backbone with short streamers should be in contact with the water.

#### **5c. Mandatory Line Weighting Requirements (also see regulations)**

*Note: Line weighting can lead to risk of accident or injury, fishing practices need to be assessed, risks identified and procedures both documented and implemented to manage these risks.*

During all daylight sets (see Regulations for detail of what constitutes day and night) the line must meet the following specifications:

- 1 weight 40g or more within 0.5m of the hook; OR
- 1 or more weights of 45g or more 1m from hook; OR
- 1 or more weights of 60g or more 3.5m from hook; OR
- 1 or more weights of 98g or more 4m from hook.

Vessels that cannot meet mandatory weighting measures must set at night, with tori lines deployed, OR use hook-shielding devices in line with the regulations.

#### **5d. Best operational guides for line weighting and good sink rate (around 0.3m/s best practice)**

- Weight line to achieve satisfactory sink rate so seabirds have less time to target the baited hooks.
- In times of heightened risk, add more weight and/or remove some floats.
- Using line setters or slowing vessel's setting speed will reduce tension on the setting line and increase sink rate.
- Applying weights at regular intervals will help maintain a steady sink rate.
- Mainline diameter and materials, the distance between hooks and numbers of floats used can all effect the sink rate.
- Night setting makes it difficult for seabirds to see baited hooks (except full moon).

#### **5e. Best operational guides for offal and fish discharge**

- No continuous or ad hoc discharge of fish waste, offal should be held (in bins, fish pounds, etc.) for as long as practicable and 'batch' discharged when fishing ceases or, if required, during hauling on the opposite side of the hauling station.
  - When setting and/or hauling, used bait must be held and discharged after operations have ceased.
  - If too many birds are crowding the hauling line, discharge a batch of offal/ waste or whole fish on the opposite side of the hauling station to distract the birds.
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## 6. Risk Management Plan Responsibilities

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### Responsibilities of Vessel Owner and Operator

- Display a copy of “The 10 Golden Rules for SLL Vessels” on the bridge.
- Ensure fishing operations are meeting mandatory requirements.
- Ensure all crew are briefed on the SLL OPs, the vessel’s PSRMP and fully understand all the actions required.
- Be aware of marine protected species activity around the vessel, assess risks and take actions needed to minimise risk.
- Ensure the vessel has on board a fit and proper tori line, plus spare and sufficient parts to maintain and repair in event of loss or damage.
- Ensure vessel is using mandatory mitigation measures and additional measures as considered appropriate to the risk to seabirds.
- Deploy and/or adjust mitigation measures to best suit weather, fishing and processing conditions to minimise risk of seabird interactions.
- Ensure correct reporting (FNZ and LP) and that trigger reports are sent promptly to your Liaison Officer.
- Ensure crew are meeting their responsibilities listed below.
- Address any deficiencies in implementation of the PSRMP as noted by any observer.
- Address the effectiveness and content of the PSRMP with a liaison officer if seabird captures exceed trigger points.

### Responsibilities of Crew

- Be familiar with the SLL OP and other documents provided and put these into practice.
  - Ensure offal/fish waste is not discharged immediately before or during shooting and if discharge during hauling is unavoidable, batch discharge from the side opposite the hauling station.
  - **Hauling:** *Period from when the marker buoy is taken on board until the last of the longline is on board.*
  - **Shooting:** *Period from when the marker buoy is off the deck until the last hook is at fishing depth.*
  - Haul the line as quickly as practicable and always minimise the time the line remains at or near the surface.
  - Tori lines are deployed and adjusted to best suit weather, fishing gear and operations, and fish waste discharge conditions to minimise risk of seabird interactions.
  - Ensuring the tori line (and other bird scaring devices) remain ‘fit and proper’, using spare parts to rebuild/replace if they are damaged or lost.
  - Maintain a watch of seabird and mammal activity around the vessel and advise the skipper as appropriate when it is clear there is risk that requires action including:
    - Not shooting in presence of significant feeding activity.
    - Adjusting hauling speed and operation to reduce risk.
    - Advising if any protected species is seen caught and ensuring its immediate release if alive.
    - Handling captured seabirds safely and carefully, returning all seabirds to the sea (unless requested otherwise by MPI observer) as per best practice to reduce potential of cryptic mortality.
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## 7. Reporting Protected Species Captures – Trigger Limits

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### Trigger Limits & Vessel Action

#### Trigger Points include:

##### Any 24 hr period

- (Alive or Dead) Any great albatross, penguin, dolphin, sea lion or basking shark,
- (Alive or Dead) First turtle capture of fishing year,
- (Alive or Dead) 3 large (e.g. albatross/mollymawk, giant petrel, gannet), or
  - 5 small (e.g. petrel/shearwater) seabirds, or
  - 2 fur seals,
- (Dead) Any black petrel or flesh-footed shearwater.

##### Any 7-day period

- (Alive or Dead) 10 protected seabirds of any type, or 3 turtles, or 5 fur seals.

### Action Required

**Report all trigger points to your local Liaison Officer within 24 hours so that any follow-up can be discussed and carried out. Emails from Sat-C or texts are OK.**

Your local Liaison Officer's contact details are on your Protected Species Risk Management Plan.

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## 8. Audit & Review

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Government fisheries observers on your vessel will audit the implementation of your PSRMP. Information they collect will be provided to DOC, Fisheries NZ and the Liaison Officer.

If your PSRMP is not being implemented effectively, it means that either the Plan needs updating or practices onboard need to be improved. Your Liaison Officer can work this through with you and update your Plan if necessary.

Your PSRMP may also need updating at other times. For example, if you change gear or target species, or there are changes in any element of your fishing operations that relate to the risk of protected species captures. At these times, please contact your Liaison Officer.

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## 9. Fisheries NZ Reporting Requirements

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### All protected species captures

It is not illegal to accidentally capture protected species while commercial fishing, but **it is illegal to fail to report the capture**. It is important that all captures and mortalities are reported accurately. All protected species (captures or deck strikes, see below) dead or alive (then returned to the sea) must be recorded on the Electronic Logbook.

Fisheries NZ observers may decide to keep some protected species caught for autopsy and identification. They are permitted to do so. The vessel may only do so if it holds a DOC permit.

### **Always meet your legal requirements.**

- **Captures:** *An animal (dead or alive) which is brought onboard on/by the fishing gear and requires assistance/help off the vessel.*
  - **Deck-Strikes:** *Birds that 'collide' with the vessel/deck/superstructure and are dead or injured, and are unable to leave vessel of their own accord, report as 'deck-strikes'.  
**Not reported if alive and leaves the vessel unassisted (i.e. landed on vessel).***
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## 10. Animal Handling/Release and Crew Safety

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### Release Alive

Every care should be taken to release animals alive and in the best condition possible. Handle with care to minimise any further stress, harm or injury to the animal, and to increase its survivability back at sea. Refer to the [DOC Handling and Release Guide](#) for further diagrams and instructions. **Deliberately harassing or harming these animals after an incidental capture is an offence.**

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### Seabirds

- Keep the bird calm by covering the head with a cloth. Use two crew if possible; one to support the bird, while the other frees the gear from the bird. Use gloves and eye protection (some birds can inflict a nasty bite).
- Carefully isolate the tangled snood or hook. Remove the snood or hook while holding the bird firmly.
- Once freed, place the bird gently back into the water. If the bird is waterlogged keep it in a safe place, such as an empty fish case, until it has recovered.

Refer to the [DOC Handling and Release Guide](#) for further diagrams and instructions.

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### Marine Mammals and Sharks

- If possible, remove animal from the longline without bringing aboard. This is especially important for sharks as their body structure does not protect their internal organs when hauled on deck or over rails.
- If possible, give seals time and space to leave the vessel. Do not take actions that will antagonise the animal and watch carefully for signs of aggression.
- Do not allow crew to be in the animal's path or escape route. Use netting as a moving barrier or a deck hose to persuade/guide the animal back to the sea.
- Seals can carry a number of diseases infectious to humans. Handling marine mammals should always be kept to a minimum and should only occur if absolutely needed.

When attending to animals landed on deck, the following steps should be followed to ensure crew safety:

- Whenever handling bodies of drowned fur seals (or any other marine mammals), wear waterproof gloves and waterproof protective clothing.
- Avoid direct contact with blood, urine, faeces, and other body fluids. It is also important to avoid the mouth of the marine mammal as this is a major source of disease.
- If bitten or grazed by a marine mammal, wash and disinfect the wound immediately, apply betadine/antiseptic ointment and cover the wound. This minimises the risk of 'seal finger', a chronic and very painful infection caused by bacteria carried by some marine mammals. Visit a doctor once ashore as infection is very common with seal and sea lion bites.
- After handling any marine mammal, crew should wash their hands and forearms with antibacterial soap and hose down their protective clothing.

Refer to the [DOC Handling and Release Guide](#) for further diagrams and instructions.

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### Turtles

- Utilise the dehooker and line cutter in your turtle kit (if you don't have one on board, contact your Liaison Officer to supply you with one).
  - Release while in the water, do not pull onboard.
  - If hooked or swallowed, cut the snood as close to the animal as possible.
  - If tangled, cut the snood as required to remove the line.
  - Refer to the [DOC Handling and Release Guide](#) for further diagrams and instructions.
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### Returning Dead Protected Species to the Sea

The entire body of any dead protected species must be returned to the sea, unless a MPI observer onboard the vessel directs the skipper to, or they themselves keep it or the skipper has been advised otherwise by DOC or Fisheries NZ. Usually, they only keep seabirds.

**Taking any part and keeping it or cutting or mutilating the body of a protected species is an offence.**

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