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New Zealand Sport Fishing Council Submission Proposed Animal Welfare Regulations Significant Surgical Procedures

The submitters

1. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council is a recognised national sports organisation with over 35,000 affiliated members from 55 clubs nationwide. In 2012 the Council initiated LegaSea to generate widespread awareness and support for the need to restore abundance in our inshore marine environment, as well as to encourage people to help resource the NZSFC engagement and participation in marine fisheries management, marine protection, advocacy, research, education and alignment.
2. Our representatives are available to discuss this submission in more detail if required. We look forward to positive outcomes from this review and would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Helen Pastor, secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.

The New Zealand Gamefish Tagging Programme

3. This is a cooperative project supported by MPI and its predecessors, NZSFC, fishing clubs, and anglers. It was introduced in 1975 as a multi species tagging programme to study the seasonal and short-term movements of pelagic species of importance to New Zealand fisheries. While the intention was to tag billfish, it was accepted that a variety of fish species would be tagged.
4. The programme was reviewed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1991. One of the outcomes was an intention to focus tagging effort on four species - striped marlin (*Kajikia audax*), shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*), blue shark (*Prionace glauca*), and yellowtail kingfish (*Seriola lalandi*.) (Saul & Holdsworth 1992). These species were selected on the basis that either there was potential to tag enough fish to provide useful data, or they were species of national or international significance or concern. Yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) were added to the group of species to be tagged from 2000–01. These programmes have gained widespread support from

anglers in many countries around and provide the only logistically and economically feasible way to tag large numbers of marlin (Ortiz et al. 2003, Pepperell 1990). MPI funded a review of the programme by an international expert panel in 2008 and a number of changes were made to the operation and reporting.

5. The number of marlin tagged per year has averaged 1097 since 1994. The number of yellowtail kingfish tagged peaked in 1994–95 and since then about 790 have been tagged per year. Sharks tagged also peaked in 1994–95 and since then an average of 733 have been tagged per year. Information collected on tag cards provides details of when and where fish are caught useful for characterising recreational fisheries. Fishers believe they are assisting with conservation of fish stocks and recaptures provide information on migration, stock structure and growth.

All animals – surgical tagging for research, testing and teaching, or for functions under section 5(3) of the Act

6. In 2012 the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council agreed that animal welfare matters. The Council's submission supported the importance of science based assessment, rather than emotive or animal rights based assessment of the welfare of animals when developing strategy and legislative proposals. We agreed with the objectives of the 2012 review, to have clear and enforceable standards for welfare, but to regulate only where necessary.
7. The tags used in this programme are Hallprint intra-muscular external (spagettii) tags applied with a stainless steel applicator tip. <https://hallprint.com/fish-tags-summary> Billfish, sharks and tuna are tagged in the water with minimal handling. Most kingfish are measured on board before being tagged and released. Tagging instructions include the species and size of fish suitable for tagging.
8. Tag insertion is not a significant surgical procedure. The use of anaesthetic and need for veterinary supervision is impractical and unnecessary. The extra burden of a large fish carrying a tag is not significantly greater than a fish of the same size being caught and released without a tag. The regulations must expressly allow non-veterinarians to carry out this type of tagging as a procedure under section 5(3).
9. New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and LegaSea have developed an educational package called FishCare to promote best practice techniques to help recreational fishers reduce their impact on our fisheries and the welfare of fish. <https://fishcare.co.nz/handling-and-releasing/> Currently this focuses on inshore species.

References

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