

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO VENT YOUR FISH?

Many reef-dwelling marine fish have a swim bladder that regulates buoyancy and allows them live to at different depths in the water. When one of these fish is brought to the surface at a high rate of speed, their swim bladder expands at a rapid rate putting substantial pressure on their internal organs causing eversion of stomach and distended intestines. This pressure, if not relieved quickly, prevents the fish from returning to the depths from which it came. Fish that are not properly vented remain on the surface of the water and either die due to the pressure on their organs, or are eaten by predatory fish and dolphins.

## SIGNS THAT A FISH NEEDS VENTING

Reef fish suffering from distended or burst swim bladders will present one, if not several, warning signs. The first sign is when a fish's stomach is sticking out of its mouth (this will look like a large pink tongue coming out of its mouth). **Under no circumstance should an angler puncture the everted stomach or force it back into the fish!** Puncturing, or placing pressure on the stomach will almost always lead to the death of the fish.

The second sign that a fish requires venting is when you observe the fish's intestines protruding from its anus. **Do not attempt to push distended intestines back into the fish.**

In most instances, using proper venting procedures will ensure the fish's distended stomach and intestines will return to their normal state. Proper venting gives the fish its best chance for survival.

## HOW TO PROPERLY VENT A FISH

Best practices in fish venting call for venting the fish as quickly as possible while handling the fish minimally.

**STEP 1:** Hold the fish gently but firmly on its side. Place your VENTAFISH™ tool with the 45 degree front end approximately 1-2 inches from the base of the pectoral fin.

**STEP 2:** After removing the safety cap, slowly depress the plunger. The needle will penetrate the fish as you depress the plunger. Your VENTAFISH™ is designed so that it will not lock into place. Only depress the plunger enough to release the gases. The sound of the escaping air and deflation will be noticeable.

**STEP 3:** Return the vented fish to the water as soon as possible. If the fish is slow to respond, try reviving it by holding it with its head pointed downward while moving it back and forth to restore the circulation of water over the gills. Continue until the fish is able to swim unassisted.

Recent research indicates that when fish are vented properly mortality rates decrease significantly. This is especially important for the following reef-dwelling species:

- Gag Grouper
- Red Grouper
- Red Snapper
- Black Sea Bass
- Other assorted freshwater and saltwater benthic species (fish with closed swim bladders).

We commend groups such as Mote Marine Laboratory and Florida Seagrass, who among others, are engaged in research regarding proper fish venting techniques, issues relating to fish mortality rates, conservation, and the effects these issues have on the reef fish population. We are doing our part to assist these groups in their continued efforts through the VENTAFISH™ Foundation.

