



Fish Care must be a HIGH priority

B.A.S.S. is a leader in conservation but we need help to maintain that reputation. Every catch is now recorded for television, printed in magazines or live-streamed on the Internet. What you do and say influences other anglers - and how they perceive you and B.A.S.S. It is critical that you **"Do it right."**

1. Landing & Handling...

- **The #1 complaint from fans watching our tournaments is boat-flipping fish onto the carpet.** We discourage this 1) to protect the bass' slime coat, and 2) because it looks to our viewers like we don't care about the wellbeing of the fish.
- **Make every effort to grasp the fish by lower jaw or lift them by the line** - catching them before they hit the deck. **DO NOT** lay fish on hot, dry carpet when culling.

2. Livewell Operation is Critical to Survival...

- **Water temps below 65°F** pump in freshwater at regular intervals to refresh the livewell.
- **Water temps from 65-75°F** pump fresh water *continuously* and turn on your recirculating aerator.
- **Water temps over 75°F** fill livewells early, cool with small amounts of ice and turn on the recirculating aerator full time. Don't pump in hot surface water all day. Do not add *excessive* amounts of ice - Cool the water no more than 10°F below lake temps. This is usually no more than 5-8 lbs per side. Too much cooling causes shock when the fish are released after weigh-in. Add additional ice as needed to maintain temps.
- **Keep both livewells full** and divide your catch. Use pool noodles or sponges to reduce sloshing.
- **Install livewell lid ventilation devices** to help cool the water, allow fresh air in and CO₂ out.

3. Fizzing Can't Wait...

- **Learn to fizz.** Fish caught in deep water suffer with overinflated air bladders. Leaving this untreated for just a few hours reduces survival. Check fish regularly and fizz them *in the boat!* Do not wait for the tournament staff to render first-aid on the release boat. How-to videos for smallmouth and largemouth at <https://video.bassmaster.com/detail/videos/conservation>. Contact Gene Gilliland for a needle source.
- **Weighted fin clips do NOT cure over-inflation** – restricted blood flow and damage to internal organs can still occur even though the fish are upright and appear normal. You must fizz struggling fish.

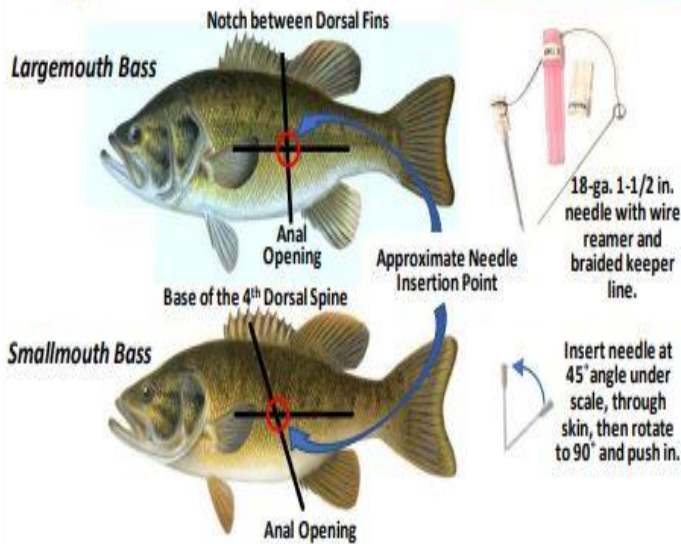
4. Bagging Fish & Weigh-in Lines...

- **Keep your fish in your mesh bag while waiting in line.** Please do not pull fish out to show to fans or photographers backstage. They can get photos in your boat while you are bagging, or on stage. Excessive handling and air exposure causes additional delayed mortality that we hear about long after we are gone.



Barotrauma Relief "Fizzing"

For a video go to
www.Bassmaster.com/conservation
and click on Conservation Videos



Steps to treating Barotrauma - over-inflation of the swim bladder

1. Put fish in livewell allowing 5-10 minutes to acclimate before assessing need, re-assess several times throughout the day and treat fish immediately when symptoms are seen.
2. Symptoms - Fish can't remain upright, constantly struggle to submerge, float on side or back, bulge on side near tip of pectoral fin.
3. Hold fish firmly, slightly out of water (or place on smooth, wet surface) to insert needle.
4. Target area is the intersection of a line drawn straight towards the tail from the tip of the pectoral fin laid flat against the fish, with the vertical line for each species as shown in the diagrams: for largemouth, a near vertical line from the notch in the dorsal fin to the anal pore; and for smallmouth a diagonal line from the base of the 4th dorsal spine to the anal pore.
5. Insert clean 18-gauge x 1-1/2 inch hypodermic needle under a scale and into skin at a 45° angle towards the fish' head. Penetrate skin then rotate needle vertical to 90° and push straight in.
6. Keeping a wire reamer in the barrel of the needle while inserting will prevent clogging. Reamer can be made from welding tip cleaner wire or 10-ga stainless wire from tackle component suppliers. Attach reamer to needle hub with a length of braided fishing line (see photo on other side).
7. Hold the fish under water. Remove reamer after fish is submerged. Watch for bubbles. **DO NOT** squeeze. Allow gas to escape until the fish becomes neutrally buoyant (neither sinking nor floating).
8. Don't keep fish out of water longer than YOU can hold your breath - that's what the fish is doing!
9. Return fish to livewell and monitor frequently. A fish swimming upright is ready for release. But if the fish is still struggling/floating on its back or side, it could need a second fizzing.



KEEPING BASS ALIVE Top 10 Fish Care Tips

- 1 Land fish quickly; Don't play them to exhaustion.
- 2 Use barbless or circle hooks whenever possible.
- 3 Protect the slime coat. Only touch fish with wet hands. Don't let fish flop on the boat deck. Use a rubber or nylon landing net.
- 4 Hold small bass vertically by the lower jaw. Support large fish horizontally with a hand under the anal fin.
- 5 Minimize air exposure time. Remove hooks quickly with as little tissue damage as possible.
- 6 Determine immediately if you are going to keep or release the fish and plan accordingly.
- 7 Proper livewell operation is a must to maximize survival. Follow guidelines in *Keeping Bass Alive* at Bassmaster.com/conservation.
- 8 Learn to spot swim bladder overinflation; immediately use side fizzing to relieve the condition.
- 9 Don't release fish into stagnant backwaters and high traffic areas.
- 10 Do not release injured fish or those too weak to swim. Better to harvest these.

Learn more at

Bassmaster.com/conservation