



Use circle hooks or lures

It is important to avoid gut hooking of fish intended for release. Gut hooking can be minimised in a number of ways, one of which is to use tight lines as these generally result in a hook set in the mouth of the fish. This is the case when lure fishing and lures almost always avoid deep hooking.

Another option is to use in line circle hooks. These nearly always result in a hook set in the side of the mouth. However, slow steady pressure is required to set the hook into the corner of the snapper's mouth.

If a snapper has been deep hooked, consider quickly killing it and retaining it as part of your catch (if you are still within your limits) because its chances of survival if released are likely to be reduced.



Release snapper quickly

Catching and releasing snapper quickly will improve survival. There is evidence that exhausting fish during the fight will reduce their chances of survival if released. It is better to bring the fish boat side and to release it quickly while in the water to help the released snapper to survive.

Minimise the stress on the fish by being quick to catch and release. It is better for the fish in every way.

You can help released snapper survive.

Following the key points outlined in this brochure will help released snapper to survive. Responsible recreational fishers who follow these practices will contribute to preserving our world class fishery while enjoying this great recreation.

Remember high-grading of fish is illegal

High-grading of fish involves a person who has caught and retained his/her catch limit of legal size fish, who then continues to catch more of that species, subsequently discarding the previously caught ones, dead or alive. This is an offence under 92/95 s.68A(3) (b) of the Fisheries Act. A person must not – take or have in their possession more fish than the catch limit for that species of fish. Fish caught that are retained in a live-well, catch bag, esky, bucket, or any other container count towards your bag limit.



For further information on these points go to www.vrfish.com.au/snappersurvival

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Help released snapper survive

You can help increase the survival of snapper you release by following the points in this brochure.



Victoria's snapper fishery is world class

Following the key points in this brochure will help increase the chances of released snapper surviving. Aggregations in Port Phillip Bay and elsewhere in the state have been massive in recent years. Multiple hook ups are common when a feeding school is located. Sometimes this means that fishers targeting mature snapper reach their bag limit of 3 snapper per person over 40 cm in a short space of time.

If a full day's fishing had been planned, many fishers are reluctant to leave if the bag limit has been reached quickly; preferring to continue to catch and release snapper. However this is a risky business as there are a number of identifiable causes of reduced survival of released snapper. This brochure is designed to inform and educate recreational fishers on what they can do to ensure maximum survival rate.



Fish shallow water to avoid barotrauma

Snapper (*Pagrus auratus*) can suffer barotrauma when caught from depths greater than about 11 metres. The extent of the barotrauma depends on the water depth and to what extent the snapper is acclimatised to the depth in which it has been caught.

Even though there may be no external signs of the barotrauma and the released fish may swim off strongly, there may be short and long term impacts from internal injuries. The rate at which a snapper is brought to the surface generally has little impact on the extent of barotrauma because the fish has a closed swim bladder and cannot regulate for the change in pressure in short time periods.

The extent of the harm to the fish can vary greatly and may make the fish more vulnerable to predation and may also affect the gonads to the extent that the released fish may not breed successfully.

You can help ensure that released snapper survive by moving into shallow water to continue fishing once you have caught what you need.



Leave snapper in the water for release

Air exposure is harmful to all fish species which are being released. Fish being held out of water are holding their breath. Avoid air exposure for snapper that you intend to release by de-hooking and releasing the fish while it is still in the water. If you must lift the fish from the water, keep the time of air exposure to a minimum. Dot point – Minimise handling and netting



Minimise handling and netting

Avoid all handling of the fish if possible. Snapper actually have a very delicate layer of skin over their scales which can be damaged through handling and netting. If you must net and remove the fish from the water to de-hook, do so as quickly as possible and avoid hot and dry surfaces. Use knotless nets and wet hands to minimise harm to the fish and support its weight. Do not use devices like lip grips that suspend the weight of the fish from a single point.