Want to Catch more fish?

Have more fun fishing?

Become a more skilled angler?

And most importantly know that the Billfish you released is more likely to survive?

# THE DAYS OF GETTING POINTS ON THE BOARD TO THE DETRIMENT OF OUR FISHERY ARE GONE!

Laurie Wright, Professional Gamefishing Association Cairns & Peter Mamino, Ingham Rod & Reel Club spoke at our members meeting held 5 April 2006. If you weren't there you missed out!

*I took some notes and will now attempt to do the presentation justice.*

DO BILLFISH HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVAL, POST RELEASE WHEN THEY ARE CAPTURED ON CIRCLE HOOKS?

Laurie is positive that this is the case. He assesses this through observations from his fishing, feedback from other Captains who use Circle Hooks Only for Bait Fishing and the results of studies. There was a study done in the USA which monitored the survival of White Marlin captured on J Hooks and Circle hooks.

75% of the fish captured using circle hooks survived
25% of the fish captured using J hooks survived.

Dr Julian Pepperell quotes some interesting results from his studies involving his satellite tagging program. Dr Pepperell says "20 out of 20 fish caught with circle hooks survived for at least ten days. However, 7 of 20 fish caught with J hooks (on bait) died"

Dr Pepperell also says that the Key Survival Issues for billfish most likely are:

Playing time
Hook damage
Deep hooking when using baits
Predation by sharks on release.

SOUNDS INTERESTING?

WHAT TYPE OF CIRCLE HOOKS SHOULD WE USE?

Laurie and Peter both say

- Use the proper traditional circle hooks.
- Watch out for J Hooks with an upturned tip, they look a little like circle hooks but they are not.
- When offset more than 2% the circle hooks works just like a J Hook.
- No need to use chemically sharpened hooks
- Don't sharpen your hooks.
- When you use super sharp hooks you increase the chance of gut hooking ie. There is more chance of the tip of the hook being caught on tissue in the fish's stomach.

WHY DO CIRCLE HOOKS CATCH MORE FISH?

It's not just a fallacy, it relates to the presentation of the bait.

- When a fish strikes at the bait it is likely to get pricked by a J Hook. The J hook is enclosed within the bait. When a fish strikes they feel that metal (hook) and know that the bait is different.
- A circle hook is different, it's not buried in the bait. When the fish strikes it doesn't feel the metal and in the process of swallowing the hook doesn't get pricked until at the end when the hook lodges in the corner of the mouth.

- Observations prove that when a billfish is hungry and feeding it swallows it's prey in about 2 to 3 seconds. The fish strikes the circle hook bait, there's no prick to turn it off, and down the belly it goes.
- The bait fish is swallowed quickly and in practice the bait stays in the stomach and dislodges from the hook. The hook then comes out of the stomach to hook up in the corner of the mouth.
- In short the circle hook rigged bait appears to be more authentic to the billfish and when used properly catches more fish than J hooks.

SOME ANGLING TIPS

- To fish with circle hooks you first need to be comfortable with free spooling.
- Like all fishing there is always more than one method. The hook up times vary.
- Free Spooling is very important when using circle hooks.
- Some people count to 10, some to 5 while others count to 15.
- Remember it only takes 2 to 3 seconds for the billfish to swallow the bait. When the fish strikes the bait they prop to a 60° angle and then swallow the bait.
- Laurie says it's quite common for a fish to swallow a circle hook rigged bait and before they have time to get the other lines out of the water the fish has gone for another. The fish is not hurting, as it hasn't been gut hooked, and wants to keep feeding. When the fish comes up to the pattern he has seen the other baits too. It's the fish's aim to eat as many as it can.
- There's no need for a long drop back when you are using circle hooks. It's estimated that a hungry billfish makes 15 movements within 10 seconds of striking the bait. Each one of these movements causes more slack in the line, this is caused by the 'water drag'