



Sea Turtle Handling and Resuscitation Requirements

Fishermen are required to handle sea turtles caught during fishing with due care to prevent injury to live animals, observe for activity, and return to the water following the procedures below.

- ⚡ Sea turtles that are actively moving or determined to be dead (see next bullet) must be released over the stern with the engine in neutral, when fishing gear is not in use, and in areas where they are unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels.
- ⚡ A turtle is determined to be dead if the muscles are stiff (rigor mortis) and/or the flesh has begun to rot. Otherwise, the turtle is considered comatose or inactive and resuscitation attempts are necessary.
- ⚡ To resuscitate a sea turtle:
 - ☑ Place the turtle on its bottom shell (right side up) and elevate hindquarters at least 6 inches. The amount of elevation depends on the turtle size, with larger turtles needing higher elevation.
 - ☑ Keep the sea turtle shaded and damp or moist but under no circumstance place in a container holding water. A water-soaked towel over the head, shell and flippers is the most effective method to keep the turtle moist.
 - ☑ Periodically, gently rock the turtle side to side by holding the outer edge of the shell and lifting up each side of the shell in turn, a height of about 3 inches.
 - ☑ Gently touch the eyes and pinch the tail (reflex test) periodically to see if the animal responds.
 - ☑ Continue resuscitation attempts for at least 4 hours and up to 24 hours.
- ⚡ Sea turtles that revive and become active must be released over the stern as described above. Sea turtles that fail to respond to the reflex test or fail to move after 4 to 24 hours must be returned to the water in the same manner as actively moving turtles.
- ⚡ Turtles must not be consumed, sold, landed, offloaded, transhipped or kept below decks.