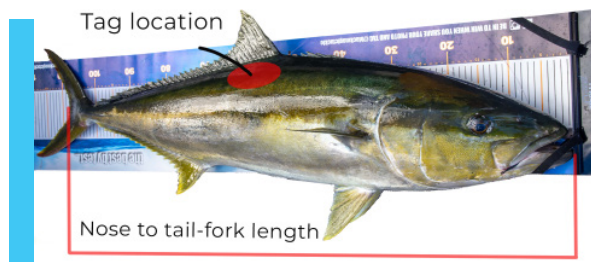


## MEASURING AND PHOTOGRAPHING

- Place any fish on cool wet surfaces. Fish dislike being placed on hard surfaces, so you may need to gently restrain the fish in order to measure them.
- Do your best to stop the fish from thrashing around on the floor.
- On the measuring board you can hold one hand over their head and the other around the base of the tail.
- For release, hug the fish with one arm while holding the base of the tail in the other hand and slide the kingfish into the water head-first.
- Use both arms to cradle the fish by the mid-section so it's weight is supported. This is also a good way to hold the fish when taking photos.
- Do not use a towel on the fish, the possible exception being a small, soft, clean wet cloth placed over the fish's eyes to help calm it.
- Be ready with your equipment (camera, measuring board etc) so you can return your fish to the water as soon as possible.

## ACCURATE MEASURING

To properly use a measuring board and get an accurate measurement, the fish must have its lower jaw against the headboard. Photograph/record its length before release. Length is measured to the nearest whole cm, if it is between 87 cm and 88 cm, then record 87 cm as the length. This is standard scientific practice.



The best place to tag a kingfish is high in the shoulder area. If tagged in the side of the fish, the fish will often rub against objects and either render the text unreadable or remove the tag.

## TAGGING

Tagging kingfish is a great practice as it helps with gathering data and contributes to better management of the species. Place the tag on the upper dorsal surface below or just behind the dorsal fin, angled towards the back to improve water flow over the tag. For more information on tagging kingfish, go to -

[www.fishtagnz.co.nz/yellowtail-kingfish-tagging-procedure/](http://www.fishtagnz.co.nz/yellowtail-kingfish-tagging-procedure/)

**FishCare** – The school of best practice is an educational programme initiated by LegaSea and the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council to help fishers reduce their impact on the marine environment. [www.fishcare.org.nz](http://www.fishcare.org.nz)



Where possible, release fish whilst still in the water. Removing the barbs on your hooks makes this task easier. Photo Credit: Digital Fish



# YELLOWTAIL KINGFISH

## BEST PRACTICE



Kingfish are a prized fish amongst fishers and should be treated with respect and care when captured.  
Photo Credit: Digital Fish

### INTRODUCTION

Yellowtail kingfish are a highly respected sportfish and New Zealand has arguably the best kingfish fishery in the world.

The economic and social value of kingfish to New Zealand fishers, visitors and regional economies is high. As such, it is in our best interests to understand and adopt best practice principles when catching and releasing kingfish.

### TECHNIQUES

Lures, live baits and well-presented dead baits are the most popular techniques to target kingfish. Fishers need to use suitably strong tackle (e.g. 24-37kg mainline) as lighter line may result in the fish breaking free and carrying around terminal tackle, impeding its survival. It may also result in longer fight times, reducing the chances of survival due to a shark attack. The minimum legal size for a kingfish is 75cm, which is about a 6kg fish.

### HOT TIPS

- Tie strong, reliable knots and make sure your reel and rod are fit for purpose and well maintained so the possibility of gear failure is minimised.
- Lures (i.e. knife jigs or top water lures) usually hook fish in the jaw. When released, these fish have a better chance of survival than deep hooked fish.
- When lure fishing with stick-baits or trolling lures like Rapalas, please replace treble hooks with single inline hooks as they minimise damage to the fish.
- When using live baits to target kingfish, use non-offset circle hooks as these have been proven to reduce gut hooking and the risk of mortality.
- Use suitably strong leaders to reduce the risk of breakage and help control the fish when landing.
- If using sinkers whilst live baiting always position the sinker above the swivel (and the hook below the swivel) so that if the fish does break the line it does not have a sinker in tow.



Non-Offset circle hooks are the best choice of hook when using baits to target kingfish as they are the least likely to gut hook fish.



Never put your hands in the gills of a fish when handling them for release. Photo Credit: Digital Fish

### HANDLING AND RELEASE TECHNIQUES

Kingfish are a species that can handle being caught and released fairly well as they are not susceptible to barotrauma, and if handled properly will recover quite quickly. Ideally, where possible, release fish whilst still in the water boat side.

- At every stage of handling take good care of the fish so its chances of survival are maximised if the fish is to be released.
- Use a rubber mesh net for smaller fish where practicable. For larger fish, if your boat is close to the water and the fish is caught on a jig you can lift it by holding the jig.
- You can use a lip gaff or a lip-grip device designed to lock on the lower jaw if the above options are unavailable.
- Prior to fishing file or flatten the barbs on your hooks so they are easy to remove.
- Do not put your hands in the gills or gaff the fish anywhere other than the mouth.
- Where fish may have swallowed a bait, cut the line as close to the mouth as possible whilst the fish is in the water or use a net or lip gaff if the fish must be brought aboard.
- Large kingfish have learnt how to survive over time and these genes are valuable for the population. Please consider releasing large fish instead of killing them.