

Two people fished almost every day for three weeks in a row. During these weeks, they caught almost 700 cod of which nine had an implanted acoustic tag. All fish were caught in relatively shallow water.

The cod were caught and handled following best practice. This means that only single or small triple hooks were used, and the fish were released immediately after capture. The implanted acoustic tags made it possible to follow the cod's behaviour after the release event; how active they were, and if the fish followed the same day rhythm as just before they were caught and released.

100 percent survival

All nine cod survived, but three of them showed some behavioural alterations. Two were less active during recovery, while one became hyperactive for some time. All three cod returned to their normal behaviour after about half a day.

"We found that cod can survive catch-and-release. Moreover, the fish get less stressed and afflicted if they are handled properly. It is important to point out that the cod in our experiment were caught in shallow water. The results could have been different if the cod had been caught in deeper water, says Ferter."

"However, we have good indications that, in some cases, cod even survive if brought up from deep water; even though the swimbladder bursts and the fish suffers other barotrauma issues. At the moment, we are having a closer look at the survival of cod caught in deeper water".

Need for guidelines

To increase survival chances it is important to develop and implement guidelines that explain how to treat captured fish on land, Ferter advises.

"Some immediate tips to anglers are to avoid using large triple hooks; these can lead to foul hooking and severe injuries. Use wet hands when touching the fish and avoid long air exposure. If you catch a lot of fish under the minimum landing size, it can be smart to change the fishing spot or use a different type of lure," he recommends.

 [Cod survives catch-and-release. When treated carefully, the fish is not so easily stressed and suffers less. \(Photo: Martin Wiech\)](#) [6]

 [Captured fish should be treated with care before it is released: Use wet hands when touching the fish and avoid long air exposure. \(Photo: Institute of Marine Research\)](#) [7]

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[Institute of Marine Research](#) [9]

[Fishing tourists release small cod](#) [10] [Fishing: Big increase in catch-and-release](#) [11]

[Keno Ferter's profile](#) [12]

[Keno Ferter et. al.: Catch-and-release of Atlantic cod \(*Gadus morhua*\): post-release behaviour of acoustically pretagged fish in a natural marine environment, Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, 2014 doi: 10.1139/cjfas-2014-0290](#) [13]

Side story

Side story

Fact box catch-and-release

Catch-and-release originated in England where nobility fished for recreation, not subsistence. In Norway, catch-and-release has been a common practice in the salmon fishery for many years, but recently, its practice has also become more common in marine fisheries. Voluntary catch-and-release means that a fish is released because the angler has already caught enough; the fish is undesired or is the wrong size. Regulatory catch-and-release means that an angler releases a fish because it is under the minimum landing size or due to other harvest regulations.

[Marie Hauge](#) [14]

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