



Fact Sheet (14)

Livebaiting Recommended Code of Practice

Since fish first swam, millions of years ago, whether in fresh or saltwater, they consumed other creatures as part of their diet. They still do. In seeking to offer baits which are natural, and behave so, anglers may consider the use of live grubs, worms, crustacean or fish as bait. The use of live fish as bait is an established, legal angling method which is highly effective in freshwater fishing for pike, eels, catfish, perch and zander. The method may also be used for chub and - where permitted - trout.

There is no difference between using live fish and any other type of live bait, bearing in mind that there is no scientific evidence to support the assertion that fish feel pain. However, to avoid possible conflict with those who may not share this view it is imperative that when Livebaiting, anglers should do so in a responsible manner, both in terms of obeying the law and in terms of conservation.

General principles

Always check the fishery rules before using livebaits. It is essential to ensure that Livebaiting is permitted on the water you are fishing. Also ensure that the fish to be used are in ready supply. Fish stocks must not be depleted and 'specimen' fish or 'rare' species must never be used.

Never introduce or remove fish to or from any water without the permission of the fishery owner.

You should check regional byelaws to ensure that you conform with any restriction on the number of livebaits you take and the method by which they are retained.

Transfer of livebaits between waters carries the same risks as fish stocking. Unauthorised introduction of fish into any waters may upset the ecological balance and damage the fishery through the spread of either unsuitable fish species, or harmful diseases and parasites.

In England and Wales, Section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, states that you must have written permission (consent) from the Environment Agency before you introduce fish into any inland water. This includes fish which are health certified and come from a reputable source.

Although no such legislation currently applies in Scotland it is recommended that, for as long as this situation prevails, anglers in Scotland also take account of the following guidelines.

Using livebaits on the water from which they are taken

When using livebaits from the fishery from which they were caught, they should be retained and used there preferably on the same day.

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Stillwaters - Most are self contained and in England and Wales Section 30 will only be required for livebaits brought to the water from elsewhere.

Rivers, Canals and Drains - In general anglers may transfer livebaits between adjacent stretches of the same river or canal without Section 30 consent, providing that this does not involve carrying them in a vehicle. Anglers wishing to move livebaits further than they might walk during the course of a day's fishing are advised to apply for Section 30 Consent. During the course of a day's fishing are advised to apply for Section 30 Consent.

Using livebaits on other waters

If you wish to transfer livebaits between any waters in England and Wales you must first obtain Section 30 consent. Applications for Section 30 consent to introduce fish which are intended for use as livebaits are treated in exactly the same way as any other application for the introduction of new fish stocks.

It usually takes about 10 working days for the Environment Agency to process an application and issue your consent. In certain circumstances it might take longer so plan well ahead.

Section 30 Consent is normally a one-off permission issued for a specific date and site. Your application must give the exact date you plan to introduce fish. After the EA has provided your Section 30 Consent, you can only change the date you plan to introduce the fish in exceptional circumstances. It may be possible to obtain consent which covers more than one date, or between a range of dates. This is known as a 'Block Consent'. It may be used, for example: -

- i) If you want to introduce trout bought from a single registered fish farm - to be used as livebait at the same site (still water) where the Agency judges the ecological risks are minimal.
- ii) If you plan to introduce coarse fish into a water where the Agency would not normally insist on a health check (so-called 'non-mandatory' waters that are totally enclosed)

For specific advice on the use of Section 30 Consent in England and Wales you can contact the Environment Agency on 0845 933 3111, alternatively the telephone number for your local Environment Agency office is provided on your rod licence.

With regard to Scotland, it is imperative that coarse species are not introduced into waters where they may not already be present. If you wish to use salmonids, it is recommended that you obtain health certified stock and that you restrict their use to catchment areas which are stocked with the same strain. You should retain any bill of sale.

Issued by the Pike Anglers' Club of Great Britain in conjunction with the Specialist Anglers' Alliance, for and on behalf of the following group members:

National Anguilla Club, Eel Study Group,
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