

PROCEDURE FOR SEA TURTLE FISHING HOOK REMOVAL

Caught onshore or from a pier

1. Bring turtle to shore or get it up on the pier;
2. Support the turtle's body weight while lifting it from the water using a large size dip net for smaller sized animals;
3. Cut the line, but leave at least three feet of line attached to the hook;
4. Call the SCDNR 24-Hour Hotline at 1-800-922-5431;
5. Keep the turtle in the shade and cover it with a wet towel. The turtle will wander around, so it will need to be contained. Do not turn the turtle on its back;
6. **Remember all turtles have powerful jaws** especially loggerheads (South Carolina's most common sea turtle). Never attempt to pry a turtle's mouth open with your hands. If the turtle is simply snagged and the hook can be easily removed from, remove hook and line and safely release the turtle back into the water. If the hook is embedded in the mouth or throat, please contact us.

Caught offshore or unable to bring the turtle to shore

- Follow the second and third steps above, to get the turtle onboard the boat;
- Try to get the turtle to bite on a piece of wood or PVC. Use a net or gaff handle to keep the jaws open. Never attempt to pry a turtle's mouth open with your hands;
- One person should tip the turtle up on the back edge of its shell while another person holds extends the head and neck straightening the esophagus;
- A third person should thread the exposed line through a ¾" diameter, small section of PVC pipe (mouth gag). Keep even pressure on the line and push down on the PVC to dislodge the hook using an approved dehooking device. After the hook is dislodged, turn the pipe 180 degrees while, keeping pressure on the line so the hook barb is pointing towards the middle of the esophagus not the outer edge. Pull straight up keeping enough pressure on the line, so that the hook remains firm against the bottom of the pipe;
- If unsuccessful, or none of the necessary tools are at hand, keep the turtle cool, covered and notify SCDNR as to where and when the vessel will return to port.
- If unable to return to port and bring the turtle the shore for care at that time, then cut the line as close to turtle as possible and release.