

Angling & Handling Guidelines

Tutorial **15** /24
EVENT PLANNING SERIES

1. Functioning, circulating live wells should be on board each competitor's boat, and should be inspected by tournament officials each day. This should be the only acceptable means by which live fish are transported. Fish should not be kept on stringers at any time. Portable re-circulating live wells would be acceptable.
2. In extremely warm conditions, competitors should have ice on board to reduce the temperature of live well water to healthy levels for fish. Adding ice in individually sealed containers reduces the threat of shock to the fish, and eliminates the risk of contamination of the live well water from chemicals like chlorine. Temperature can be kept as low as 10°F (5°C) below the surface lake water temperature (including the water in holding tanks and release tanks). Water temperature should play a major role in the planning and organization of walleye, northern pike and muskellunge tournaments.
3. No live or preserved bait should be allowed (except pork rind strips, which must be approved by tournament organizers).
4. The transfer of fish between boats could result in disqualification of both parties. The only exception to this rule would be if one team's boat has a live well failure and all of its fish have to be transferred to another boat. A method of marking or identifying the fish should be established. If this occurs, the boat with the live well failure could no longer participate in the event until the live well has been repaired.



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5. Fish damaged by handling or hooking in the gills or eyes should not be eligible for release. In the opinion of the tournament biologist and/or judge, fish which cannot be released and reasonably expected to survive could receive a weight penalty (see Tournament Penalties).
6. Only fish hooked in the mouth, as is required by federal legislation should be eligible. Snagged fish should not be eligible to be weighed in, and should be returned to the water immediately.
7. All non-target fish and undersized target fish should be immediately released, unless they are seriously damaged. Any seriously damaged fish, for which the season is open, should be turned over to the tournament biologist or judge and should not be kept by the competitors.
8. Tournaments should have a plan to deal with rough water conditions which addresses options for competitors and organizers to reduce the stress on fish under exceptional circumstances (e.g. alternate weigh-in sites, allow boats to return to weigh-in sites over land).
9. Fish exposure to air has been shown to increase post handling mortality and, therefore, should be kept to a minimum during the weigh-in. (See water weigh-in section for more details.)