



**IN DEFENSE
OF ANIMALS**

**THE PLANET'S
MOST ABUSED
ANIMALS
CAN'T RUN OR
SCREAM**

RESPECT FOR FISH



Respect for Fish Day is an annual day of action created by **In Defense of Animals** to raise awareness about the plight of fish. Fish are the planet's most widely abused animals, but their suffering receives the least attention. Trillions of fish are exploited and killed every year in the food industry, the pet trade, and laboratories.

Science is increasingly revealing that fish are intelligent, emotional beings, and has proven that fish feel pain, yet they are rarely protected by animal welfare legislation.

A 2015 study published in acclaimed journal *Animal*

Cognition reviewed over 200 papers on fish intelligence and neuroscience. It concluded that “when comparing [fish] behaviors to primates, one finds very few differences,” and that if “any animals are sentient, then... fish are, too.”

Respect for Fish Day aims to demonstrate that fish are deserving of the same level of compassion and protection granted to any other animal.



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FISH FEEL PAIN

Over the past decade, a large body of scientific evidence has proven that **fish are capable of feeling pain**. In one experiment, trout had their lips injected with bee venom, bringing on behaviors indicative of suffering such as rubbing against the sides of their tanks, rocking back and forth, quick breathing, and appetite loss. While trout usually avoid new objects in their environment, those injected with bee venom were less cautious because of their discomfort. All of these behavior changes ceased when the fish received painkillers.

In another study, fish were given a choice between swimming in a well-decorated tank or a barren one. They consistently chose the decorated tank, but upon being injected with painful chemicals, their preference immediately shifted to the barren tank which contained painkillers.



FISH FEEL EMOTIONS

In addition to physical pain, research suggests that **fish experience emotions**. In one study from the University of Guelph, trout learned to escape nets when forewarned of them in advance. The study's authors concluded that fish **"can experience**

fear and... learn to avoid frightening stimuli." In another study from Stanford University, fish who were exposed to painful heat showed signs of stress which, according to the study's authors, was indicative of "fear" and "wariness."

DID YOU KNOW?

Although fish don't have vocal cords, they still audibly communicate with each other by vibrating their swim bladders or rubbing their fins together, similar to what crickets do with their wings.



Graham Campbell
<http://bit.ly/2Oj4nXc>

FISH ARE SMART

Fish are also highly intelligent. **They can count, learn by imitation, recognize the faces of group members, and use tools.** For instance, wrasse (a family of marine fish) use rocks to crush hard shellfish just like monkeys and otters. Fish also cooperate toward common goals and refuse to work with individuals who they catch cheating or not doing their fair share.



Klaus Stiefel
<http://bit.ly/2KV64bl>

FISH FARMING

Fish are the most commonly farmed animals in the world. Farmed fish are confined in overcrowded dirty tanks and ponds, or in underwater cages in natural bodies of water. Overcrowding causes the animals to become aggressive and their water to become soiled with excrement.

Farmed fish are genetically selected to grow much faster than their wild counterparts, which weakens their immune systems and makes them susceptible to many health problems. **Unsanitary environments** also **attract parasites like sea lice, who eat the fish alive.** To counter health problems caused by unnatural conditions, **farms pump fish full of drugs, vaccinations, and antibiotics.**

Prior to slaughter, **fish are starved for days** to empty their guts. Since fish are generally not protected under humane slaughter laws, they are **killed in barbaric ways** which include being **suffocated, frozen to death, and decapitated.** They may also be **gassed with carbon dioxide, causing them to hemorrhage blood from their gills.** In many instances, fish are brutally **skinned and butchered while fully conscious.**



Farmed fish being injected with vaccine drugs.



Sukree Sukplang / Reuters

Tilapia living in dirty water on a fish farm in Thailand.



Alexandra Morton



University of St. Andrews

Farmed salmon being eaten alive by lice.

- **50 percent of farmed salmon** are **partially deaf**, and **80 percent have impaired vision** from cataracts.
- Farmed fish develop vertebral deformities, such as **bent spines**, and **cardiac malformations, causing their hearts to flip upside down.**
- Over **20 percent** of farmed fish **die from cruel living conditions on fish farms** before their planned slaughter.
- Brutal living conditions affect fish psychologically. Around 25 percent of farmed fish are referred to as “drop-outs.” These animals are physically healthy, but effectively suffer from **severe depression, causing them to become unresponsive and lose their appetites.** A 2016 study found that farmed fish have excessively **high stress hormone levels.**



Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

Farmed salmon with a head injury.

COMMERCIAL FISHING

Trillions of wild fish are slaughtered every year in the commercial fishing industry.

Large nets pile fish on top of one another where they are **crushed or suffocated** by each others' weight.

Trawling nets are dragged along the ocean floor and sweep it clean of any life.

Longlines have hundreds or even thousands of baited hooks. Fish caught on these lines often **suffer for days or die from starvation, exposure, and open wounds** before they are pulled out of the water.



Gillnets capture fish around the throat when they swim through them, leaving them trapped and unable to breathe.



Robert Visser / Greenpeace

Wild fish are killed by being **frozen to death** or they are **left to suffocate, which can take a full ten minutes** of agonizing desperation for water. Their suffering is similar to that of a drowning human. Fish are also **decapitated, stabbed, or beaten to death**. Large fish like tuna are extracted from nets by having sharp hooks jabbed into their faces or other body parts. **When fish are removed from the water, their swim bladders often burst**. Many suffer from a condition called barotrauma, **which causes their stomachs to expel from their mouths** due to decompression.



Paul Hilton / Greenpeace

Shark Finning

100 million sharks are killed annually to make gourmet soup. They have their fins hacked off while they are fully conscious and are dumped in the ocean to die from blood loss.



Paul Hilton / Greenpeace

SPORTFISHING

Every year in the U.S., **over 300 million fish are captured by recreational fishermen.**

After being dragged to the surface, fish suffocate when they are removed from the

water and sometimes their **stomachs expel from their mouths and their eyes pop out of their skulls** as a result of decompression. Fish also sustain severe injuries from the

Up to 86 percent of caught fish die from their injuries if they are released.



Oregon State University

Rockfish with barotrauma, caused by decompression.



Shark having a hook removed from his mouth after being caught by recreational fishermen.



NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Bluenose cod with mouth injury that was inflicted by a fishing hook.

Trophy Fishing

Like lions, elephants, and other land animals, fish are slaughtered so that trophy hunters can pose with their carcasses. Fish are also slaughtered in killing contests and tournaments where contestants compete to kill the largest fish.



Florida Keys Public Libraries
<http://bit.ly/2Ojv1hD>

hooks that pierce their mouths and bodies. **Fish are often hooked in vital organs, like their hearts or lungs,** or are hooked in the throat. Removal of fishing hooks is extremely painful and often causes a slow and painful death. Many fish are unable to properly hold food in their mouths due to the damage inflicted to their jaws. **Twenty-two percent of caught fish have their vision permanently impaired from hooks puncturing their eyes.**

The **cruelty** inflicted on fish during sportfishing **would be considered a felony** in many states **if it were inflicted**

upon a dog or cat. Sadly, standard fishing practices are excused from compliance with animal abuse laws in most U.S. states.

Fishing is a bloodsport since it involves the torture and killing of animals for personal pleasure, competition, and entertainment.



Lenore Edman
<http://bit.ly/2QREwro>



Discarded carcasses of marine fish who died during capture for the pet trade.

THE PET TRADE

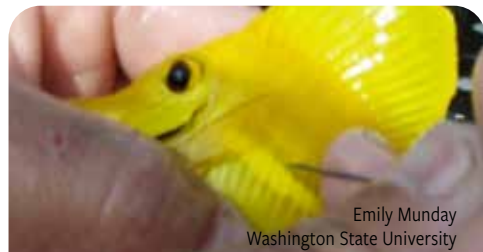
The commercial capture, breeding, and selling of fish as pets is rife with brutality.

Most saltwater fish are caught from the wild and are often **stunned with cyanide gas**. Many sustain serious injuries during this process and are discarded. Nearly half of those who survive their capture die from neglect and stress long before they are sold.



Angie Torres
<http://bit.ly/2Olo4E2>
Bubble Eye Goldfish.

Freshwater fish are mass **bred in unsanitary facilities** that are the **underwater equivalent of puppy mills**. Fish are commonly transported to pet shops in tiny bags (which are pumped with chemicals) and held in **severely overcrowded and disease-ridden tanks**. They are often starved during transportation.



Emily Munday
Washington State University

Marine fish captured for the pet trade are stabbed with needles to deflate their swim bladders, which expand when they are brought to the surface.



Most Nemos Are Never Found

After Finding Nemo's release, the demand for clownfish in home aquariums skyrocketed. Wild clownfish were captured en masse, leading to the species' decline. Many of these fish died during capture.

Sick fish are killed in barbaric ways which include being stomped to death, slammed into hard surfaces, and beaten with nets. In some cases, large numbers of fish are killed off by **poisoning their water with deadly chemicals**.

Many breeds of fish sold in pet shops are selectively bred or genetically altered in ways that are adverse to their health. For instance, bubble-eye goldfish have large skin sacs under their eyes which impair their vision and make them susceptible to injury and infection.



Betta fish living in dirty water at a pet store.

Since pet store employees are generally not provided with information about proper fish care, they often misinform customers. Fish sold as pets frequently die from improper care and neglect following purchase. **Fish are not covered by animal cruelty laws in many states.** Even where they are, abuse and neglect is rampant, conditions are seldom reported, and abusers are **rarely pursued by law enforcement**.



EXPERIMENTATION



Zebrafish being force-fed chemicals with a tube.

The use of fish for experimentation is dramatically increasing. Most of this increase is due to the breeding of genetically modified animals who are engineered to have genetic defects or to be susceptible to chronic diseases.

Fish in laboratories are subject to a range of cruel procedures such as being **force-fed poison, cocaine or alcohol**; undergoing stimulation-**induced heart attacks**; having portions of **their brains**



Zebrafish having a portion of his tail cut off for use as a skin sample.

chemically destroyed; having portions of **their tails cut off for skin samples**; and **being afflicted with cancer**. In some cases, they **develop tumors that are almost as large as their bodies**. Fish exploited for research are rarely provided enrichment or comforts of any kind, nor are they covered by the Animal Welfare Act (the only federal legislation concerning animals in laboratories) which offers the most minimal protection.

Zebrafish with cancerous tumor on his head.

Oregon State University
<http://bit.ly/2shc2wQ>



WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can help our finned friends in a variety of ways:

1 Reduce or eliminate your consumption of fish

products. Plant-based versions of fish are readily available from companies like Gardein, Ocean Hugger Foods, Sophie's Kitchen, Good Catch, and Quorn.



2 Don't participate in sportfishing.

If a fishing related event is taking place in your area, submit a complaint to the hosting venue or write a letter to your local newspaper explaining why angling is inhumane.

3 Don't purchase fish from pet stores.

If you want a fish as a companion, you can adopt one in need of a home. You can find needy animals on Petfinder.com or Adopt-a-Pet.com. You can also contact your local humane society or county animal control and

let them know that you're interested in adopting any fish they rescue. They often have resources for rescue groups in the area.

4 Teach children about adoption and rescue,

and why it is so important to avoid breeders and pet stores.

5 Report cruelty to fish.

If you witness a fish being abused or neglected, file a report with your local animal control or police department. You can contact **In Defense of Animals** if you need assistance filing a report.

6 Participate in or organize an event for next year's **Respect for Fish Day!**

Please contact fish@idausa.org for more information and support.



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**Help The Planet's
Most Abused Animals.**



For more information about Respect for Fish Day and **In Defense of Animals'** campaigns to protect fish, please visit our website at respectforfish.org or email fish@idausa.org