



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE  
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**A guideline for safe and live release of encircled whale sharks  
during purse seine fishing operation**

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**WCPFC-SC8-2012/ SC8-WCPFC8-10**

**JAPAN**



**COMMISSION  
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**Proposal by Japan**

It is sometimes inevitable for whale sharks to be encircled during operations of purse seine. If that happens, in order to avoid mortality of whale sharks, fishermen should make every effort for its safe and live release using the following as a guideline, while taking due consideration of the safety of fishermen.

**A guideline for safe and live release of encircled whale sharks**

1. Fishermen should take all necessary measures to avoid mortality of whale shark.
2. If a whale shark is found in an encircled net, the net should be carefully rolled up so as to confine the whale shark in a relatively small area. The next step should be chosen from the options below, based on the response of the whale shark.

**A) When the whale shark is floating on the surface**

1. Fishermen should attempt to lead the whale shark to approach the nearest corkline by rolling up the net of the ventral and tail side.
2. Release the cork rope of the head side.
3. Roll up the net of the tail side carefully and let the shark go over the corkline.
4. Wait for the shark to escape from the net for itself.
5. Harvesting of catch should occur only after the releasing of the whale shark.

If the encircled shark is very small, i.e. less than 2m long, the shark can be directly scooped with the loading net and released to ocean.

**B) When the whale shark remains under water**

Loading of the catch can be undertaken carefully until the whale shark surfaces. After the whale shark surfaces, loading should be suspended and the procedure set out in A) above should be followed.

**C) When the whale shark keep thrusting its head on the net**

Whale sharks sometimes attempt to escape from the net and thrust their head to the net or they entangle with the net. In this case, the net should be cut as soon as possible so that the shark can escape.