

Animal Ethics Manual – Wildlife

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

SOP No: W-1

SUBJECT: Netting and Trapping Freshwater Fish

POLICY:

1. To ensure minimal disturbance of fish collected in the wild
2. To minimize the time fish are in air by removing them from traps or nets and returning them to habitats quickly.
3. To minimize impacts on non-target species ¹.

PRECAUTIONS: (Operator safety).

EQUIPMENT: Seine nets, fyke nets, cast nets, gill nets, bait-fish traps, and any other similar type nets and traps. *Please note “Opera house traps” should not be used.

PROCEDURE:

1. Fyke nets must provide access to air for air breathing by-catch (either a float or a breathing tube – e.g turtles, reptiles, water rats, platypus) (Arthington et al. 2005²) and all passive traps (i.e. including bait traps) be emptied or observed frequently to prevent accidental drowning. *
2. For active netting (e.g. seine nets), if multiple tows are conducted removed fish should be held appropriately until measurement. This would be within appropriate (to fish size and number) aerated (and shaded) containers. *
3. Gill nets must be checked and cleared regularly and fish removed quickly to minimize fish damage (* see recommendations below).

NOTE: The Griffith University AEC considers Gill netting to be non-preferred sampling methods due to high mortality rates and by-catch (5). As such this method will only be considered on a case-to-case basis where the researcher can provide compelling reasoning based on the likely species that will be captured and their likely survival due to limited net-soak times (that account for the species biology).

4. Processing of fish (e.g counting, measuring, and weighing) should be done as quick as possible to return fish to point of capture. *
5. If fish need to be held for any time for processing (measurement) or procedure (e.g fin-clipping, tagging) they should be held appropriately (e.g in aerated tubs – relevant to number of fish and body size of fish) *

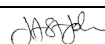
6. If conducted rapidly, minor procedures (e.g. weighing or measuring) should not require anaesthesia. *
7. Fish should be released at the point of capture or disposed of as required by fishing permit conditions (e.g. noxious fish)³. Please also ensure that cleaning and disinfection requirements are followed as per the biosecurity obligations after each fieldwork.

RECOMMENDATIONS: * Specify frequency or timing (and justification in relation to target and non-target species biology) in the AEC application.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

APPROVED: 2024

TO BE REVISED: 2026

APPROVED DOCUMENT ON INTRANET ONLY – UNCONTROLLED DOCUMENT WHEN PRINTED.						
Version No:	Description	Approving Authority	Signature:	Contact Details	Date	Review Date
V02	Netting and Trapping Freshwater Fish	Animal Ethics Committee		#56618	2016	2018
V03	Netting and Trapping Freshwater Fish	Animal Ethics Committee		#56618	2021	2023
V04	Netting and Trapping Freshwater Fish	Animal Ethics Committee		#27800	2024	2026

REFERENCES

1. NHMRC (2004) *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (7th edition)*. Australian Government.
2. Arthington, A.H., Balcombe, S.R., Wilson, G.G. and Thoms M.C. (2005) Spatial and temporal variation in fish assemblage structure within isolated waterholes during the 2001 dry season of an arid-zone floodplain river, Cooper Creek, Australia. *Marine and Freshwater Research* **56**, 25-35.
3. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. (<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries>)
4. Cohen, S (personal communication) (2024)
5. Lake, M (2013) *Freshwater fish: passive nets— fyke nets Version 1.1*. New Zealand Department of Conservation. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/science-and-technical/inventory-monitoring/im-toolbox-freshwater-fish/im-toolbox-freshwater-fish-passive-nets-fyke-nets.pdf>