

Circle Hooks

Design Pierces Fish Through Jaw, Promotes Conservation

It looks kind of funny. Unlike the traditional "J-shaped" hook, the circle hook has a circular shape and a point that turns inward to the shank at about a 90-degree angle. But despite its unusual appearance, the circle hook seems ready to set the sportfishing world abuzz.

- Conservationists are urging their use because the design usually results in a hook through the jaws or lips, increasing the fish's chance of survival after release.

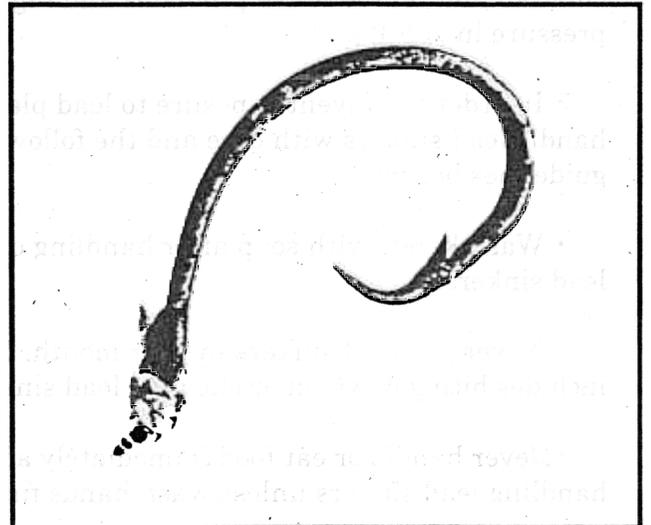
- Manufacturers are reporting an increase in sales and are introducing new sizes geared toward many different species, both saltwater and freshwater.

- And influential sportfishing experts, taking note of those trends, are testing them and enthusiastically touting them in the media, saying that in addition to promoting catch-and-release, they also hook more fish.

Circle hooks are not new. Prehistoric cultures carved fish hooks in circular designs out of bone, shell and other materials. The commercial long-line industry began using circle hooks in the 1960s and 70s because they were more efficient in catching fish and keeping them alive until they could be brought in.

Here's how the circle hook works:

The fish grabs the baited hook and starts to swim away. The line tightens slowly and usually pulls the hook out of the throat and to a corner of the mouth, where the point rotates and pierces the jaw hinge or cheek. Once the fish is hooked, it cannot escape.



According to manufacturers, advantages of the circle hook design include:

- * Higher catch rate;
- * higher lip-hook rate, which greatly reduces mortality;
- * ease of use because the fish hooks itself;
- * less snagging in certain bottom fishing applications.

Currently, there are two disadvantages to using circle hooks. Manufacturers agree that there is a problem with standardization of sizes. Sizes will vary dramatically from one company to another. Another potential disadvantage to circle hooks is that the action of pulling up sharply to set the hook is deeply ingrained among recreational anglers, especially experienced anglers. After spending the last 20 years educating the public to pull back on the rod to set the hook, anglers using the circle hook will need to be re-educated.

Information for this article was excerpted from, *American Sportfishing*, Vol.2 No.1, Jan. 1999.

January 1999 - Redhook, St. Thomas

Temperature

Maximum	Minimum	Rainfall
82.7 °F	71.6 °F	1.89 inches

Quote

"The wild places are where we began. When they end, so do we."

David Browser

Suggested Language to Prevent Human Lead Exposure from Lead Fishing Sinkers

• Some fishing sinkers contain lead. Lead can be dangerous to your body if eaten or inhaled. Prolonged and high levels of exposure to lead can cause brain and nerve damage, slower growth in children and reproductive problems and high blood pressure in adults.

• In order to prevent exposure to lead please handle lead sinkers with care and the follow the guidelines below:

• Wash hands with soap after handling or using lead sinkers.

• Never put lead sinkers in your mouth. This includes biting down on or chewing lead sinkers.

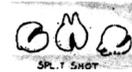
• Never handle or eat food immediately after handling lead sinkers unless wash hands first.

• You may want to consider using fishing sinkers which do not contain lead if you are concerned about exposure to lead. Alternatives to lead sinkers are made out of steel, bismuth, tungsten, resin and glass. Avoid sinkers made from zinc, as they are toxic to waterfowl.

• If you suspect lead poisoning in your child or yourself, or you would like further information call National Lead Information Clearinghouse at:

1-800-424-LEAD or U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Region II (Edison, NJ)
Phone: (732) 321 - 6671 Fax: (732) 321 - 6757
E-mail: r2lead.team@epmail.epa.gov

Types of sinkers which are now made out of steel, bismuth, resin and glass. Avoid types made out of zinc and lead.



New Environmental Education Activities available to Teachers

The Environmental Education Bureau has recently completed two new activities for elementary school students. One activity addresses the 1998 International Year of the Ocean Campaign. On the pre-school to fourth grade level, the focus is on the different products we get from the ocean. Using a posterboard along with a variety of props, we engage in a discussion about the ocean's resources.

The second activity allows students to build an island environment. Using an island diagram made from cloth and felt pieces, students manipulate the environment and development, thus altering impacts on the environment. This activity allows students to act as resource managers and discuss the types of problems they are faced with. Contact our St. Thomas office for more information on these materials.



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