

Science, Service, Stewardship



NOAA

Ever Gone Barbless?

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The goal of the Barbless Circle Hook Program is to minimize fishing's impact on our nearshore resources by promoting the use of barbless circle hooks among Hawaii's fishermen. Our research has shown that using barbless circle hooks won't affect your catch rates. Because barbless circle hooks are self-shedding they minimize impacts on protected species, fish that are accidentally lost after hooking, or those that are tagged and released or just released.



It's the hook's basic design that makes it effective – not the barb.

Preliminary studies on barbless circle hook effectiveness show that it is just as effective at catching fish in almost all situations. Similarly, the hook is just as effective at holding bait without the barb.

Ulva fishermen have been using time-tested methods, such as tying or bridling, for retaining large or live bait on barbless hooks.





Spend more time fishing

Unintentionally hooking a marine mammal or turtle can ruin a good day of fishing. Fishing areas with a high concentration of protected species expose both fisherman and marine mammal to risk. It's good to think of these mammals as dependent on the area and to respect their use and dependence by using barbless circle hooks. Barbless circle hooks reduce potential injury in the event of an accidental hooking or entanglement, and allow for quicker release or self-shedding release to reduce trauma and enable a return to normal activities.



Catch more fish

Every fisherman knows what it is like to lose a fish. Barbless hooks can help the fish that got away or in the case of lost fishing rigs hooking up - the hooks should enable self shedding which will allow for a quick resumption of feeding and minimal injury which means a better chance for survival. Using barbless also allows you to more quickly release unwanted catch which means more and healthier fish for you to catch in the future.

Stay safe

Safety is an ongoing concern for all fishermen. The use of barbless hooks can minimize injury and save a fishing day from an expensive emergency room visit. Pinching down the barb will result in an easier time unhooking that oama, as well as the scoop net, t-shirt, shorts, hat, ear, or your finger.



The largest barbless circle hook ulua to date was caught in 2006 on the Big Island. Randall Elarco Jr. caught this 117 lb white ulua on May 29, 2006. He used a barbless 16/0 mustad circle hook that he got at the Big Island Ohana tournament in 2005. At the first Annual Fishing and Seafood Festival held on October 8, 2006 in Honolulu, a special "100 pounder" award was given to Randy Elarco Jr. by Mayor Mufi Hanneman. We plan to continue to honor outstanding catches made by Hawaii's barbless circle hook anglers at the annual festival.

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We are always looking for feedback on how these hooks work or don't work for you. Contact us to share your story or get more information about this season's events.

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