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NZ Sport Fishing Council submission on The Animal Welfare Amendment Bill

Introduction

1. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council (NZSFC) appreciates the opportunity to submit to the Primary Production Select Committee in the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill.
2. New Zealand Sport Fishing Council representatives look forward to positive outcomes from this legislation and would like to be kept informed of future developments. Our contact is Roz Nelson, secretary@nzsportfishing.org.nz.
3. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council is recognized by Sport NZ as a National Sports Organisation with over 32,000 affiliated members from 54 clubs nationwide. Our members have a wide range of interests in amateur fishing, the marine environment and ocean recreation.
4. The New Zealand Sport Fishing Council has launched a new initiative called LegaSea to generate support for the ongoing effort to protect and enhance the public's access to abundant fisheries in a healthy marine environment. www.legasea.co.nz
5. The intention is to broaden NZSFC involvement in marine management advocacy, research, education and working together on behalf of our members and LegaSea supporters.
6. NZ Sport Fishing Council made a full submission to the proposals for a New Zealand Animal Welfare Strategy and Amendments to the Animal Welfare Act 1999 in September 2012. The main points made in that submission are provided below.

Submission

NZSFC agrees that animal welfare matters. In our view it is important to rely more on science based assessment, rather than emotive or animal rights based assessment of the welfare of animals when developing strategy and legislative proposals. We support the objectives of the review, to have clear and enforceable standards for welfare but to regulate only where necessary.

NZSFC supports the Government's view that hunting and fishing are important and legitimate activities in New Zealand. For many of our members, fishing is their pastime of choice, providing food for the table and the soul, and occasionally a large or special capture. Here in the South Pacific we must embrace the principles of kaitiakitanga and manakitanga. Guardianship and proper use of food from the land and sea are values which underpin all parts of New Zealand society.

NZSFC supports the continuation of the provision which exempts killing fish from the full provisions of the Act. There are instances where common commercial or amateur fishing practice may catch fish of size or number which makes quick dispatch impossible. Many fish that are caught are not killed but are released, or tagged and released. We remain committed to supporting and promoting high welfare outcomes for fish caught by amateur fishers using best practice guides and fishing club networks and look to develop closer links with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to effect these outcomes.

NZSFC supports clear minimum standards for animal welfare that should not be crossed. Sanctions should be used to prevent extreme conduct that goes beyond acceptable practice when hunting or fishing. The NZSFC and amateur fishers would not want to fear prosecution when using traditional fishing methods like hook and line, netting, spear fishing, or potting. The NZSFC submit that the definition of "willfully or recklessly ill-treat an animal in a wild state" includes that it applies where extreme conduct goes beyond acceptable practice when hunting or fishing.