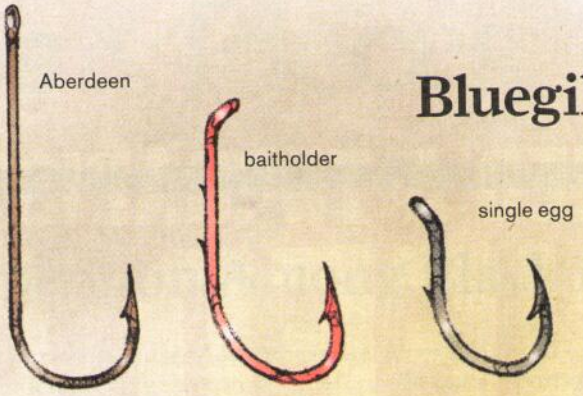

Bluegill Hooking Mortality

Angling Research—Researchers evaluated short-term mortality of bluegills that were deeply hooked on various hook styles and sizes.* They implanted hooks in the esophagus of bluegills and compared sizes #8 and #12 and three hook styles: single egg (Gamakatsu GAM-00552), Aberdeen (Mustad 3260b), and baitholder (Mustad 92681). They also compared mortality between barbed and barbless #10 baitholder hooks (Mustad 92681). They left 6 inches of line tied to hook eyes, to simulate anglers clipping the line of deeply hooked fish.

Over the 10-day observation period, 61 percent of hooked bluegills perished, and 21 percent of mortalities died within two hours. Among treatment groups, highest survival was for #12 baitholder (55.6 percent) and #12 single egg (52.9 percent). Survival was substantially lower for single egg #8 and Aberdeen #12 (29.4 percent), baitholder #8 (22.2 percent), and Aberdeen #8 (11.8 percent). Lumping hook styles, fish hooked with #8 hooks were twice as likely to die as those hooked with #12s. Larger fish also tended to survive better. Only 2 percent of fish expelled the hook in the 10-day trial.

In the barbless hook test, barbed baitholder #10s caused slightly higher mortality than barbless ones (76.9 versus 69.2 percent). The team postulated the higher mortality seen with Aberdeen hooks was due to their deeper protrusion in the fish's mouth, which might cause more movement and resulting tissue damage. Research is needed to determine long-term effects of deep hooking beyond the 10-day period evaluated in this study. ■

*Robert, J. J., S. M. Larocque, and S. J. Cooke. 2012. Influence of hook size and style on short-term survival of deeply hooked bluegills. N. Am J. Fish. Mgmt. 32:869-874.

Steve Quinn