

Animals May Need Their Appendages

Excising body parts is commonly used to identify fish and other animals. In addition to clipping functional fins, the practice includes removing the toes of small animals. In many cases the mutilated creatures are released into the wild and considered representative of an unmarked population.

An annotated bibliography of 46 papers published between 1934 and 1981 summarized the effects of fin clipping (Bergstedt 1985). In terms of recoveries, the effects ranged from slightly positive to highly negative. Overall, the reported survival of fin clipped fish was less than half that of unclipped fish. Apart from lowering biological performance, data obtained from such clipping can be biased by failure to identify clips, regeneration, "natural" fin loss, and mark duplication resulting from the paucity of unique identifications. Although less well documented, the practice of toe clipping appears to have similar limitations (Anonymous 2003).

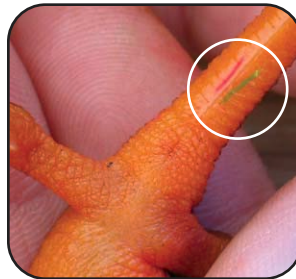
Northwest Marine Technology is dedicated to providing tools that minimize biological impacts and improve the quality of data obtained from marking and tagging.



Functional fin and toe clipping are commonly used in studies of fish, amphibians, and reptiles.



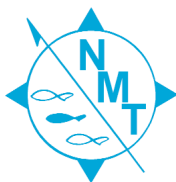
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Left: Coded Wire Tag (CWT) implants in fish and other animals minimize biological impact and provide an unlimited number of unique identifications. Center: Visible Implant fluorescent Elastomer (VIE) is being successfully used on an increasing number of fishes, amphibians, and reptiles. Right: Soft Visible Implant alphanumeric (VIalpha) tags provide individual identifications as shown under the ventral surface of the upper hind leg of this frog.

Anonymous. 2003. Guidelines for use of live amphibians and reptiles in field research. ASIH, HL, SSAR (available only online).

Bergstedt, R. A. 1985. Administrative Report No. 85-3. Mortality of fish marked by fin clipping: an annotated bibliography, 1934-1981. Great Lakes Fishery Laboratory, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ann Arbor, MI.



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