

## What are 'unclean' fish?

An 'unclean' fish is one that is about to spawn, is spawning or has recently spawned and has not yet recovered. These fish can be a dark colour with red spots on their gill covers. Their fins may be ragged, and eggs or milt (a white milky substance) may run from the vent. Unclean fish are not good to eat.

You will be breaking the law if you buy or sell unclean fish.

## Protect your trade

If you are offered wild salmon or sea trout you suspect have been rod caught, illegally caught or are unclean, please let us know. We will treat all information in strict confidence. Please ring the Environment Agency Incident Hotline – 0800 80 70 60 (Free-phone 24 hour)

Please ring the  
**Environment Agency Incident Hotline**

**0800 80 70 60**

(Free-phone 24 hour)

Would you like to find out more about us, or about your environment?


Then call us on  
**08708 506 506\*** (Mon-Fri 8-6)

email  
**enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk**

or visit our website  
**www.environment-agency.gov.uk**

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)  
floodline 0845 988 1188

\* Approximate call costs: 8p plus 6p per minute (standard landline).  
Please note charges will vary across telephone providers.

 **Environment first:** This publication is printed on paper made from 100 per cent previously used waste. By-products from making the pulp and paper are used for composting and fertiliser, for making cement and for generating energy.

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A photograph of several salmon lying on a dark surface, each with a green tag in its mouth.

**don't get caught out**

Buying and selling wild salmon and sea trout – the law

## Protecting wild salmon and sea trout

Wild salmon and sea trout are at risk. To increase the number of these fish in our rivers and protect the future of net fishing and angling, only farmed salmon and sea trout, and those wild fish caught in legal net and trap fisheries can be bought and sold in England and Wales.

It is against the law to buy and sell fish that have been caught illegally.

It is also against the law to sell or offer to sell salmon or sea trout caught by rod and line.

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**0800 80 70 60**

(Free-phone 24 hour)

## Buyers beware

If you buy or sell wild salmon or sea trout, remember it is against the law to:

- sell, offer to sell or barter in salmon or sea trout caught by rod and line
- handle salmon or sea trout which you suspect have been caught illegally
- handle salmon or sea trout which you suspect have been taken during the close season.
  - different parts of England and Wales have different close seasons, although no salmon net fishery can open until 1 June. For full details of the close season where you are, visit the byelaw pages on our website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish)
- handle salmon or sea trout at any time of year that are 'unclean' (see over for information).

These offences apply to whole fish and portions of fish.

### Remember

If convicted of these offences, you could face a heavy fine.

Please note, none of these offences apply to farmed salmon and sea trout.

## Staying within the law

You could receive a substantial fine if you handle salmon or sea trout that have been caught or sold illegally. But, it is easy to find out which fish have been caught by legal net fisheries and can be bought and sold legally.

All salmon and sea trout caught by a legal net or trap in England and Wales must have an Environment Agency carcass tag attached through their mouth and gills. These must remain attached until the fish are processed.

Rod-caught and illegally caught fish will not have an Environment Agency carcass tag attached.

Also, illegally caught fish may have –

- spear or gaff wounds
- snare or gill net marks

You may still trade in farmed and imported net-caught fish, but these will not possess an Environment Agency carcass tag.

If you want further proof of where fish have come from, especially if they are imported, you should ask the seller for a signed receipt that shows:

- the seller's name and address
- how many fish were sold and their tag identification numbers
- how the fish were caught
- when and where they were caught
- name and licence number of the person that caught the fish.

For further information, you can download our fisheries byelaws from our website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish).