

LIVE BAITS

SHRIMP

Shrimp are the most popular bait used by fishermen in Charlotte County because all fish eat shrimp and shrimp is an easy bait for anglers to obtain. Shrimp can be bought frozen at all tackle shops, certain local supermarkets, and other outlets that handle bait. Live shrimp are available at many tackle and bait shops.



While frozen shrimp are an effective bait, live shrimp are recommended because their movement and smell are attractive to fish. Live shrimp can be difficult to maintain, particularly during the summer months. Additionally, shrimp are very sensitive to salinity changes, so shrimp bought at a bait store have to be handled properly or they can die quickly. Shrimp need an aerated bucket and be careful, the hard pointed 'horn' at the top of the shrimp's head can stick you.

Freeze pack method

This method uses liquid filled plastic containers that can be frozen repeatedly. The freeze packs are placed in the bottom of the cooler. An inexpensive foam cooler will work fine. A towel, soaked in the shrimp's tank water, should be wrung out and placed on top of the packs. Place the shrimp on top of the towel, and then fold the remainder of the towel on top of the shrimp. This arrangement will keep the shrimp alive for a day, but the cooler must be used only for the shrimp and the lid opened and closed quickly so the inside temperature does not warm.

Aerated live wells

Shrimp are very sensitive and need to be kept in their own water as long as possible. New water should be added in small amounts to avoid salinity shock.

Bait buckets

During the cooler months bait buckets are effective and shrimp can be kept for more than one day by sinking the bucket to the bottom where the water is cool. The fisherman should remember to put some feed such as lettuce with the shrimp since they are cannibalistic.

FISHING WITH SHRIMP

There are four effective live shrimp fishing techniques: freelining, under a popping cork, using a sliding sinker Zrig and trolling.

Freelining

Freelining uses minimum terminal tackle, thus allowing the the bait to move naturally. A heavy monofilament leader from 10 to 30 inches long is attached to the standing line with a Surgeon's Knot.

The Mustad 9174, a short shank live bait hook, is very good for this method. Depending on the size of the shrimp, a 2 to 2/0 hook should be used. Hook the shrimp under its mouth and pass the point behind the eye and horn. but in front of the brain, which is a dark spot visible slightly behind the eye. Hooked in this manner the shrimp will stay active and look natural in the water. This presentation is good for moving matter and is excellent for snook. Tackle should include 8 to 20 pound test line.

The angler must learn not to set the hook every time there is movement on the line as shrimp naturally swim and move around to avoid fish. A small split shot can be used to control the depth.