

PROTECTING PETS AND WILDLIFE AROUND FISHING TACKLE



Words and Image Liza Schneider, Holistic Vets

Fishing can be great fun for the whole family but unfortunately fishing tackle can cause severe injuries to our wildlife and our pets too. This is especially true when hooks and line are left, irresponsibly, to litter our environment and when hooks have bait still attached, they are a target for greedy dogs and hungry cats.

Over the years, I have treated many animals with 'body piercings' caused by fish hooks; especially seabirds with hooks stuck in their beaks or hooks that have been swallowed and become lodged in their bodies.

One day a shag was brought in with a fishing hook in its beak. Shags are robust seabirds with sharp beaks and will not hesitate to bite. Their long necks give them plenty of range and we are always careful to handle them with care. Thankfully it was easy to remove the hook and unwrap the attached fishing line. An anaesthetic was not necessary and the injuries were superficial. We placed the shag in rehabilitation and it soon devoured a meal of fish.

Moments later I examined my next patient, a delightful and large chocolate Labrador called Duke. Duke loved life and enthusiastically bounded into the room sniffing excitedly at everything around. He was especially captivated by my table and jumped up to sniff intently, much to the embarrassment of his owner who would have preferred to boast a dog with more discipline. I laughed at Duke's antics and mindlessly explained to Duke's owner, "Don't worry mate, it's all good, I've just had a shag on the table." Duke's owner was stunned into silence and it took a moment for the penny to drop when I suddenly thought to explain that the shag was a bird that I had just treated and that our staff always have time for a shag! He was most amused. ■

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