Lower Yukon Fishermen

Quality and Handling

Guidelines

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Kwikpak Fisheries has worked hard to build an exceptional reputation in the seafood markets. The fish that is caught in our region is sold worldwide in places like France, Japan, and throughout the United States. Our fishermen need to understand the importance of quality in the marketplace. Kwikpak Fisheries is striving to maintain and improve the quality of fish it produces. We can only achieve this goal is by having the fishermen and the company work together. Kwikpak Fisheries is community based. The quality of the food we produce and sell worldwide is a direct reflection on our communities here on the Lower Yukon River. We want to turn out the highest quality possible to demonstrate our nature and character. This will show our costumers why our salmon is the very best they can buy and in turn, our fishermen will receive the very highest price possible and out communities will have some level of financial stability.

Quality starts with the fishermen

Well, actually quality begins with the fish itself and we just happen to be blessed with the most nutrient rich salmon in the world. Owing to their high oil content, Yukon Salmon have the highest Omega-3 levels of any fish in the world. This has been scientifically documented and recognized by USDA and the FDA. At the same time, our salmon have exceptionally good meat color and are thick bodied. All of these attributes are due to the length of this river. Above else, they just taste better than any other fish from other regions. All of these things give our fish an advantage in the marketplace.

Due to these traits, our fish need to be handled with the utmost care and consideration. Fish that have high oil content are prone to get "soft" quicker if not chilled soon after catching. Heavy bodied fish tend to bruise easier just from their weight and being tossed around or thrown about on the deck. Bleeding fish properly and handling them with the consideration that they are food will clearly provide for a higher quality salmon and enhance their value. There are several photographs included in this manual that show the results of what mishandling and lack of icing does to our fish. Please make note of these and when you are out on your boat fishing, remember what happens to fish when it is not taken care of.

The Company's Job

All of our fishermen will benefit financially if we work together on producing the highest quality product possible. The company cannot buy poor quality, mishandled fish, and try to turn it into a Number 1 salmon. It just doesn't work that way. We have to start with a Number 1 fish coming out of the boats. We need to work together on this. The company has invested heavily in ice plants, insulated totes, slush bags, a fleet of tenders, and training for our quality control personal.

The company has ice available for every fisherman to take with him before and during commercial fish openings. Fishermen can get ice at the Emmonak, Mountain Village, Kotlik, Boreal in St. Mary's, and Marshall stations. Every tender boat will also have ice for fishermen.

Totes are available for fishermen, we have insulated totes or the white Trayco totes. We also have slush bags available for use as well. Burlap will be furnished at no charge to fishermen. We have personnel available to assist with and advise on getting you the right set up for your boat.

Some fishermen like using totes, some prefer slush bags. Whatever it is, Kwikpak is here to make it easier and available to the fishermen to produce quality product. The company will help in every way possible.

We want to have quality fish and we need to produce Number 1 quality. **Period**.

Kwikpak's Quality Control workers will be doing spot inspections at the buying stations and onboard tender boats. When fishermen deliver, fish will be checked for temperature abuse, bleeding, and overall handling techniques. Poor quality, mishandled fish will be rejected. Kwikpak will not jeopardize the reputation of its fishermen or its place in the market by mixing some bad fish in with the good quality fish. We just are going to risk doing that.

The following guidelines address all the issues and concerns necessary to produce top of the line quality fish. Please read them over carefully. Of you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact wither the General Manager, Jack Schultheis, or Marilyn Charles in the Emmonak Office at 949-1120

Boating Gear

- Keep your boat clean
    - Keep fish away from bilge water, fuel, oil, grease, smoke, chemicals, dirt or other foreign substances
    - **REMEMBER Fish are food**, they need to be kept clean, keep any contact surfaces in your boats clean
    - Flush all fish contact surfaces with clean fresh water or clean seawater.
    - Scrub all fish contact surfaces with a brush or a high pressure washing system, using a detergent solution
    - Rinse with cold fresh water or seawater
    - Sanitize with a solution containing chlorine or iodine
    - After five to 10 minutes, rinse off the sanitizing solution
    - Fishermen who use totes, keep your totes clean and sanitized
    - We will provide fishermen sanitizing solutions for your boats, can be picked up at the Kwikpak stations
    - The company has several quality control people available for direction and advise for tote and boat sanitation

Fishing Gear

- REMEMBER Fish are food
- Sets and drifts should be short and checked frequently
- Remove fish from gear carefully
    - Don't throw fish around, remember its food, handle it with care

Bleeding Your Fish

Bleeding your fish is a very important part of producing high quality salmon.

- REMEMBER Fish are food
- Bleed your fish as soon as possible when you are removing them from your net
- Bleeding your fish is real easy by cutting, pulling, or breaking the three-gill rankers in one step to prevent belly burn
- Most people do it, it should be done while taking the fish out of the gear

Icing Your Fish

Fishermen will be required to have ice onboard with them. Fishermen can pick up ice at the buying stations or tender boats. The company will keep a record for all fishermen who get ice in each opening. As you fill your tote with fish, ice should be spread through out the load.

- REMEMBER Fish are food
- It takes about one pound of ice per 7 pounds of fish or one pound of ice for one chum
- You can use slush bags or totes to keep your iced fish in, always keep your fish covered
    - You can use a moist burlap to cover your fish
    - If you are catching more fish than you have ice for keep the fish wet, keep the fish cold, and deliver as soon as possible to a tender or buying station
- Do not overfill your tote with fish
- Use your ice carefully

Handling of Fish

Pick up fish by the gill plate

- REMEMBER Fish are food
- DO NOT PICK UP FISH BY THE TAIL!
    - Handling fish by the tail breaks the backbone and causes bruising
- Do not throw, kick or step on fish
    - This causes bruising and mushy fish
- REMEMBER SALMON IS FIRST-RATE FOOD
    - Handle with care
    - Keep it cold
    - Keep it clean
    - Keep it moving, offload to tenders or buying station if you are running out of ice

Kwikpak will be inspecting deliveries both at the tenders and the docks at the time of delivery. The Quality Control Technicians will document each inspection. We will reject fish that do not follow these guidelines.

Example of poorly handled and mistreated fish

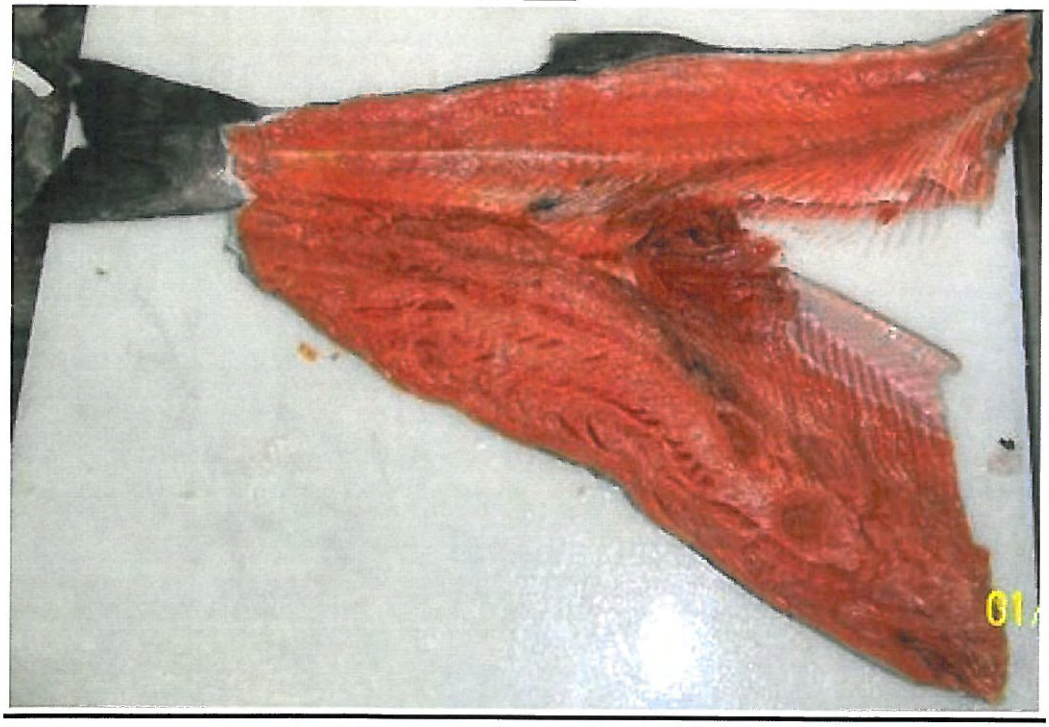


Figure 1 A fish that is not being iced or handled properly

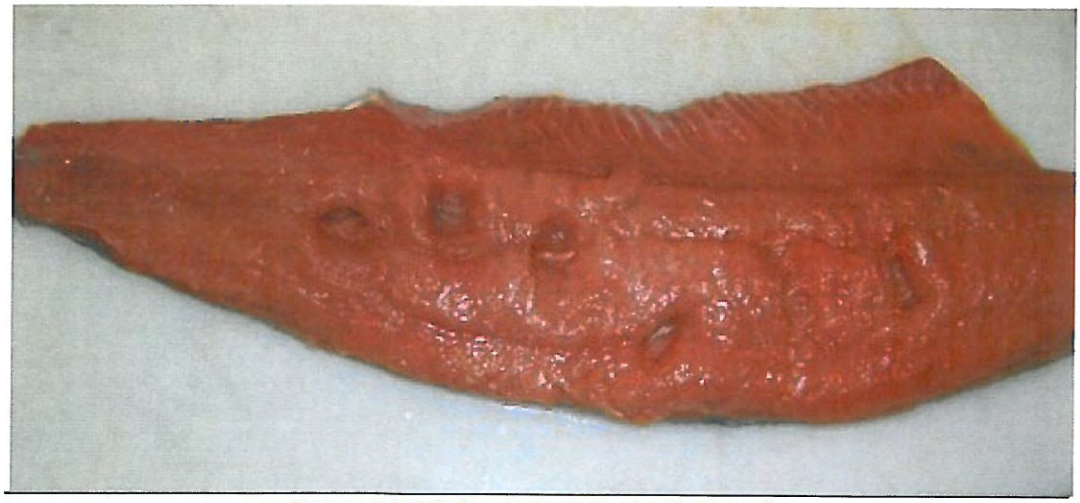


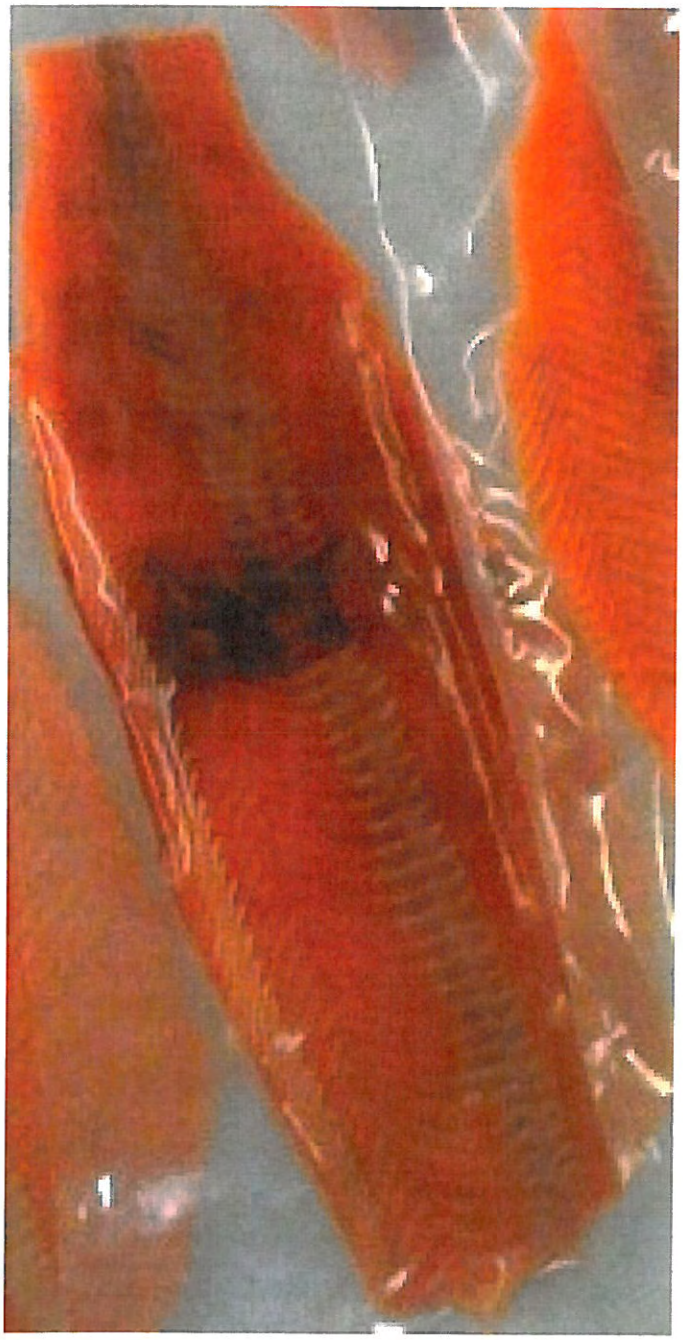
Figure 2 A fish that is not being iced properly

Figure 3 A fish that is not being iced and handled properly

Figure 4 A fish that is not being handled properly

Here is what happens to the fish when you mishandle and put too much weight on them

Here is how the fish look when you pick it up by the tail



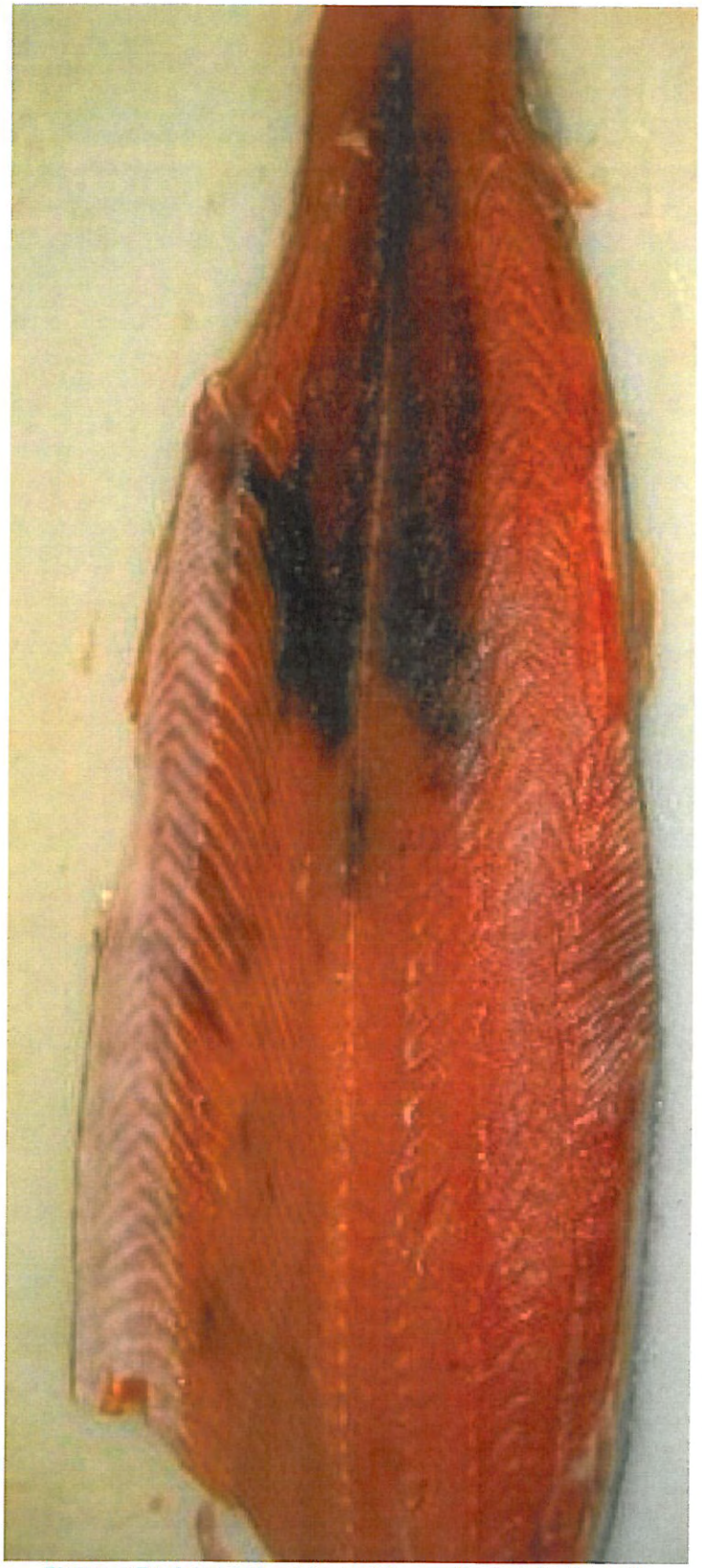


Figure 1 Bruising caused by picking up the fish by the tail

If properly handled and iced this is what the fish will look like