

Safety at the beach

Queensland's shark safety program

Queensland's beaches are among the most beautiful and popular in the world. A shark safety program is in place in many locations across the state to provide added protection for locals and visitors alike who wish to swim at our most popular beaches.

Since its introduction in 1962, this program has been effective in protecting swimmers by reducing the population of large sharks in a localised area and thereby minimising the risk of attack. However, while the program has an enviable record, it does not place an impenetrable barrier between swimmers and sharks.

Shark safety equipment is currently in place at 85 beaches at ten centres along Queensland's tropical and subtropical coast. Research continues into the most effective shark control methods to ensure that our beaches remain safe for everyone to enjoy.

How does shark control work?

Shark safety equipment is usually located on selected beaches patrolled by lifesavers or lifeguards. Equipment designed to catch sharks more than 2 metres long is positioned off major swimming beaches. This equipment can consist of both drumlines and/or nets depending on local tidal and marine conditions.

Drumlines consist of a large hook, with fresh bait attached, suspended from a plastic float and anchored to the sea bed with a rope, chain and anchor. If a shark takes the bait and swims away, the resistance created by the float embeds the hook in the shark's mouth, allowing it to be captured.

Nets are 186 metres long and 6 metres deep. They are placed adjacent to the beach and anchored to the seabed. Scientists believe that resident sharks may learn that nets and drumlines placed in their local areas represent an obstacle and actively avoid them.

This in itself deters and reduces the local population of large sharks in that particular area.



Who is involved in shark control?

Officers from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) supervise the private contractors who monitor and maintain the equipment for both drumlines and nets.

Researchers keep track of catches by recording data on species, age and gender as well as water temperature and weather conditions.

How are other forms of marine life protected?

The number of marine animals, such as dolphins, dugongs or turtles, captured in shark safety equipment is small, and the impact on their populations minor.

A 24-hour emergency hotline - 1800 806 891 - can be used to notify DAFF of the capture of any marine animal. The animal will then either be released or provided with veterinary care as quickly as possible.

Some animals may be kept and used for vital scientific research.

The Queensland Government is protecting marine animals by:

- training Marine Animal Release Teams (MART) to handle animals' safe release
- releasing alive non-dangerous and protected species of sharks
- involving community groups in the future directions of the shark safety program
- researching and implementing measures to reduce inadvertent catch, while maintaining high levels of swimmer safety.

An acoustic deterrent device is also being used to reduce humpback whale and dolphin entrapment. It emits an acoustic signal warning animals of an obstruction such as a shark net in the water. Researchers are closely monitoring the effectiveness of this device.

Rules for safe swimming

To minimise the risk of shark attack:

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| 1 | Always swim or surf at patrolled beaches, between the flags and where there is shark safety equipment in place. |
| 2 | Obey the lifesavers' and lifeguards' advice, and heed all flags and noticeboard warnings. |
| 3 | Leave the water if a shark is sighted. |
| 4 | Do not swim or surf after dusk, at night, or before dawn when shark attack is more likely. |
| 5 | Do not swim or surf in murky or silt-laden waters. |
| 6 | Do not swim in, or near the mouth of, rivers, artificial canals and lakes. |
| 7 | Never swim alone. |
| 8 | Never swim when bleeding. |
| 9 | Do not swim near schools of fish. |
| 10 | Do not swim near, or interfere with, shark safety equipment. |

Remember sharks can inhabit tidal and non-tidal waters including some freshwater streams.



Shark nets in the water.

Which beaches have shark safety equipment?

To minimise the risk of shark attack, DAFF recommends that people swim at patrolled beaches where shark safety equipment is in place.

DAFF strongly advises you to check if, and when, these beaches are patrolled by lifesaving services. Contact the local Council and/or Surf Life Saving Queensland on phone 07 3846 8000 or visit www.lifesaving.com.au

| Area | Beach |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Cairns | Buchans Point Beach, Clifton Beach, Ellis Beach, Holloways Beach, Palm Cove, Trinity Beach, Yorkeys Knob |
| Townsville and Magnetic Island | Alma Bay, Florence Bay, Horseshoe Bay, Kissing Point, Nelly Bay, Pallarenda Beach, Picnic Bay, Radical Bay |
| Mackay | Blacks Beach, Bucasia Beach, Eimeo Beach, Harbour Beach, Lamberts Beach |
| Capricorn Coast | Cooee Bay, Emu Park, Farnborough Beach, Fisherman Beach, Kemp Beach, Lammermoor Beach, Mullambin Beach, Tanby Point, Yeppoon |
| Gladstone | Tannum Sands |
| Bundaberg | Bargara, Kelly's Beach, Nielson Park, Oaks Beach |

| Area | Beach |
|-------------------------|---|
| Rainbow Beach | Rainbow Beach |
| Sunshine Coast | Alexandra Headland, Bribie Island, Buddina Beach, Caloundra, Castaways Beach, Coolum Beach, Currimundi, Hyatt Regency Resort, Marcus Beach, Marcoola Beach, Maroochydore Beach, Moffat Beach, Mooloolaba Beach, Mudjimba Beach, Noosa, Peregian Beach, Point Cartwright, Sunrise Beach, Sunshine Beach, Surfair Resort, Twin Waters Resort, Wurtulla, Yaroomba Beach |
| North Stradbroke Island | Amity Point, Cylinder Beach, Ocean Beach |
| Gold Coast | Broadbeach, Burleigh Beach, Bilinga Beach, Coolangatta Beach, Currumbin, Elkhorn Avenue, Greenmount Beach, Kirra Beach, Kurrawa Beach, Main Beach, Mermaid Beach, Sheraton Mirage Beach, Miami Beach, North Burleigh Beach, Northcliffe, North Kirra Beach, Narrow Neck, Nobby Beach, Palm Beach, Rainbow Bay, Staghorn Avenue, Surfers Paradise Beach, Tallebudgera Beach, Tugun Beach |

For more information about the Shark Control Program call **13 25 23** or visit www.fisheries.qld.gov.au

If you notice an animal entangled in shark control equipment, contact the 24-hour shark hotline 1800 806 891 (free call within Queensland).