



Fish stabs man - second marlin incident

Mike Dinsdale and Eleanor Woods | 19th February 2009

Big-game fish are fighting back after a Whangarei businessman became the second fisher in less than a week to be hospitalised after having a leg pierced by a marlin's bill off the Northland coast.

The businessman, believed to be in his 50s, was rushed to Whangarei Hospital yesterday after the bill of a young marlin he had landed on a 13-metre launch pierced his thigh.



Are the marlin biting back? - Picture/supplied

The injury came after a Kerikeri man was stabbed in the calf by a marlin bill as he was trying to tag and release the fish from the charter boat Shiraz about noon on Sunday. He was taken to hospital after the injury.

Yesterday, the businessman was on the launch Isobar fishing beyond the Poor Knights when he caught a marlin. As he brought the fish aboard about 9.30am, it started thrashing about and its bill stabbed the man's thigh, Northland St John Ambulance boss Tony Devanney said.

Mr Devanney said the injured man was believed to be haemophiliac and the other people onboard the boat did a great job in stemming the flow of blood until the Northland Electricity rescue helicopter could rendezvous with the vessel near the Poor Knights.

Advanced paramedic Sam Johanson was winched on to the vessel when the rescue helicopter reached it about 11am.

Mr Johanson bandaged the bleeding leg and stabilised Mr Oliver before both men were winched up to the chopper.

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Rescue helicopter pilot Dean Vockerlering said the man was in a serious but stable condition when he was air-lifted to Whangarei Hospital. He was undergoing surgery late yesterday.

Mr Devanney said it was unusual to have one person injured by a marlin bill, but to have two in less than a week was strange.

"It's not something we experience that often so this is fairly new to us. But there are plenty of marlin out there at the moment," he said.

Northland charter boat skipper and marlin researcher Pete Saul said it was rare for fishers to get stuck by a marlin's bill and it was "purely coincidence" that there had been two in less than a week off Northland.

Mr Saul, who skips the charter boat Lady Jess and is a director of Blue Water Marine Research, said plenty of marlin were off the coast at the moment. The 2009 marlin season had started off as the best in more than 10 years.

"It's not as if its marlin's fighting back or anything like that ... if you have got a younger fish and it hasn't put up a lot of struggle it may still have plenty of fight in it when it gets to the boat. So when you try to land it, it can thrash around, it's just fighting for its life."

Mr Saul said marlin bills carried bacteria that could cause infection, but big-game fishing was generally not dangerous.

"Some people may think it's a good thing a fish is fighting back, but it's really just one of those things that happen."

Mr Saul said with so many marlin around it was an exciting time to be a big-game fisher. He did not think the injuries would put people off.

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