Ling Potting Code of Conduct for Ghost Gear

Purpose

To establish operational expectations for ling potting that minimise gear loss and environmental impact through gear management, use of biodegradable escape mechanisms, and compliance with regulations and MSC standards. These measures apply to ling potting vessels operating in LIN2-7.

Regulatory compliance

All ling potting vessels must operate in accordance with:

- Fisheries Act 1996
- Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001
- Maritime Protection Rules
- Any other relevant legislation

Operational management

- Vessel managers and skippers must ensure all pots, ropes, buoys, connecting lines and clips are well maintained before, during, and after use. This includes timely repair or replacement of damaged or worn components, and consideration of adverse weather when setting pots.
- In accordance with the Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001 (SR 2001/253), all surface floats must be clearly, permanently, and legibly marked with the vessel's registration. Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001 (SR 2001/253) (as at 01 October 2025) – New Zealand Legislation.
- Skippers must communicate with other vessels operating in the area as necessary to coordinate fishing activity and reduce the risk of gear conflict.
- If pots connected to lines are lost, ensure all practical steps are taken to retrieve gear including the use of grapnels.

Requirement for biodegradable materials

DWC requirements

All pots used to target ling must include a biodegradable escape mechanism that:

- Creates a functional escape opening when degraded
- Allows all retained species to exit freely without obstruction
- Does not rely solely on hinges, clips, or mechanical release systems

Accepted configurations

Vessel operators must use one of the following:

1. Biodegradable panel
    - A dedicated panel or section of mesh which fully degrades, installed on the side wall or lower section of the pot

2. Rot-cord secured opening
    - A panel, lid, or opening secured with biodegradable twine
    - Must release completely when the twine fails
3. Equivalent system
    - Alternative designs that achieve equivalent escape performance, including fully biodegradable components.

Material specifications

Biodegradable components must be:

- Untreated natural fibre (e.g. cotton, jute, hemp, sisal), or
- Certified marine biodegradable materials that break down into non-toxic components

The following materials are not considered biodegradable:

- Synthetic twines (e.g. nylon, polypropylene)
- Treated or coated fibres
- Plastics that fragment into microplastics rather than biodegrade

Replacement

- Vessel operators must have procedures to inspect and replace biodegradable components at regular intervals throughout the year, as determined by the vessel owner, to ensure continued effectiveness.

Reporting lost gear

- The vessel operator will keep a log of any lost whole or large portions of fishing gear, with details of the location. These are to be made available to DWC upon request, to assist with the review of these measures and reporting for MSC.
- In alignment with maritime rules and other reporting requirements, vessels operators will report the loss of any whole or large portions of fishing gear (e.g. multiple pots connected to a line). Quick guide to Part 170 Prevention of Pollution from Garbage from ships.

Review

With support from ling quota owners, DWC will review these measures as new information emerges with input from ling potting operators.

Contact

Please contact SNZ | DWC if you have any questions or concerns.

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