

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Shrinking fish

There is much anecdotal evidence from local fishers that the onset of rigor causes fish to decrease in length after death.

To test this, some friends and I went fishing for blue cod in the Sounds last week. We caught five of legal size, between 30cm and 35cm. After carefully measuring them we put them on one side.

Two hours later we remeasured them using the identical procedure. They had shrunk between 3mm and 5mm (mean 4mm).

Obviously the extent of shrinkage will vary with time and temperature, but it does raise important questions. A fisher catching a legal fish of 30.3cm might well find that when he returns to port a couple of hours later, that fish has become illegal.

As far as I know, there is nothing in the legislation about this, although it could be advanced

as a valid defence. Given that accurate measurement of a live fish is inherently difficult, perhaps MPI should accept a 5 per cent tolerance in measurement.

Better still, of course, they could remove the slot rule.  
JOHN LEADER  
Blenheim

Please keep your letters brief, not more than 100 words, and include your name, address and phone number in full.

Marlborough  
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