

Do Trout Feel Pain?

By Ian Cox

There is an awful lot of malarkey around about the cruelty of angling. The short answer to the question; “do trout feel pain”, almost certainly not.

Though fish have small numbers of the nociceptors that enable humans to register pain, there are not enough of them and they do not attach to anything with sufficient smarts, for fish to feel pain as we understand it. Fish brains reasoned Professor Rose, in a research paper published early last year; do not contain the highly developed neocortex needed to feel pain. He said fish do not experience it in any meaningful way like humans. He concluded fish are able to experience unconscious, basic instinctive responses, but that these did not lead to conscious feelings or pain.

And I think that is the also the experience of most if not all fishermen.

It should come as no surprise that bunny huggers do not agree. Of course fish feel pain say PETA. (People For Ethical Treatment Of Animals) It stands to reason they must. How would you feel with a hook in your mouth? It is only common sense, biology 101. And if you have any doubts, Pamela Anderson agrees. As if any of these organisations have a handle on common sense!

The Royal Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Animals responded rather sniffily to Professor Rose’s paper saying “There are a number of studies which we believe provide enough evidence to show that fish do feel pain and this remains our view.”

But just look at the research. It’s a total hoot.

For example, scientist’s based in Edinburgh who have been much lauded by the animal rights movement concluded that trout feel pain because they reacted to being injected with the human equivalent of 85 grams of bee venom. It only takes about 1 gram to kill a person (500 to 1000 bees) so it was a miracle those trout did not turn belly up in their tanks. Concluding that the response of those poor poisoned fish was a reaction to pain is akin to suggesting that a car has feelings because bits of it fly all over the place when you blow it up.

Another scientist concluded that fish felt pain because they reacted adversely to heat while those dosed with morphine did not. I kid you not. Anyone who has had major surgery will tell you that the great thing about morphine is that it deadens the senses. Those fish were not reacting because they did not feel pain. They did not react because they were stoned.

I could go on but that will just belabour the point that madness can become fact if you start with a crazy premise. After all for many years smoking was scientifically proven to be good for you. Again that of course might depend on what you smoke. From where I sit it seems that the scientists who say they have proved that fish feel pain are smoking their socks.
