

# Keeping Bass Alive in the Live Well

Most Largemouth Bass survive being caught during fishing tournaments. However, a few bass die in live wells. To help keep bass alive, B.A.S.S. has provided some good guidance for tournament anglers (<http://www.bassmaster.com/tips/keeping-bass-alive>). Mortality from poor live well maintenance is preventable. This report provides more information to anglers on the use of live wells during tournaments.

- Is there a problem with anglers overloading their live wells?
- What can anglers do to maximize survival in live wells?

## WHAT WE DID

1. Determine how much weight is added to a typical live well and calculate density for tidal Potomac River tournaments.
2. For a 15 gal live well, measure changes in water quality for both typical densities (3 – 5 bass; or ½ lb/gal) and high densities (7 – 10 bass; or 1 lb/gal).
3. Adjust settings for recirculation and water exchange to determine how water quality changes.



## AVOID KILLING BASS

Few Anglers Overload Live Wells with Bass

- ➔ Typical density is about ½ lb/gal, which is good.
- ➔ Some anglers can have higher densities (~1 lb/gal) if live wells are small (9 – 30 gal) and have 7 – 10 bass; without good live well management, these densities can threaten the lives of bass.
- ➔ Without good live well management and at such high densities, bass can die when eliminating water exchanges and using infrequent recirculation (~ 9 mins) with a 500 gal/hr pump.
- ➔ Live wells that break down while fishing also kill bass because of steep declines in oxygen.

### Summer

1. Chill live wells with a bag of ice to 5 – 7° F below stream or lake water temperature
2. Use frequent recirculation (2 min interval)
3. Use infrequent water exchanges (every 2 – 3 hrs)
4. Use a minimum 750 gal/hr pump

### Spring and Fall

1. Chill live wells with a bag of ice to 5 – 7° F below stream or lake water temperature
2. Use recirculation (2 - 9 min interval)
3. Use water exchanges (every ½ - 1 hr)
4. Use a minimum 750 gal/hr pump

High survivorship at the weigh-in can be partially credited to anglers who have large and functioning live wells. Frequent recirculation with periodic water exchange is necessary to provide good conditions within the live well. Frequent water exchanges may help provide oxygen to the live well, but can increase water temperature of the live well during summer.

### If the Live Well Fails

1. Bucket in freshwater every 10 minutes, or
2. Use a spare pump, or
3. Transfer bass to a working live well, or
4. Release the bass.

During summer, water exchanges should be infrequent (every 2 – 3 hrs), but must be coupled with frequent or constant recirculation. Understandably, recirculation lowers battery power. Anglers should ensure batteries are fully charged prior to fishing or carry an extra battery, a pump or bucket as precautions to live well failure.

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