



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES



[Protect Sharks]

SHARK TOURNAMENTS SHAMEFUL

Shark tournaments are bloody and wasteful spectacles in which some of earth's most ancient predators are unceremoniously hauled out of the ocean and hung up for bragging rights and gruesome pictures, to garner huge cash prizes. Many of these animals belong to species in steep decline. Below are more details on why shark tournaments truly are shameful events.

- **The populations of most shark species are plummeting.** According to a 2008 study by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), thresher, mako and porbeagle sharks, which are frequent targets of tournaments, are threatened with worldwide extinction and blue sharks have lost up to 70 percent of their worldwide population.
- **Shark tournaments remove the largest sharks in a population.** As the goal of the contest is to catch the largest shark, they affect species by robbing the population of the reproductively mature sharks they target. Most sharks don't reproduce until they are 15 years old or older and they bear their young alive.
- **Shark tournaments are inherently cruel.** There can be no denying the cruelty and utter inhumanity of shark tournaments. These magnificent creatures, sometimes still barely alive, are hauled upon docks, weighed, and dismembered in grotesque displays. All of this takes place in an atmosphere of carnival and induced cheering that welcomes the display and photographic exposure of each new arrival. Children are encouraged to revel in the death and dismemberment of these creatures as well.
- **Sharks that are released often die in the process.** Tournament supporters often claim that, because some shark tournaments have an element of "catch-and-release," these events inflict little harm on sharks. The fact is that at most tournaments, sharks are hooked, bled, suffocated, or repeatedly gaffed. The sharks that are released often die due to stress or traumatizing injuries.
- **Tournaments are about sport, not science.** To understand shark population abundance and population dynamics, we need a scientifically valid and representative sampling of shark populations. Tournaments are conducted for sport fueled by big cash prizes and are inherently incapable of providing such data and thus cannot provide the essential information needed to understand and protect shark populations.
- **Shark meat is dangerous to consume.** Shark tournaments often promote the donation of meat to local charities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration advise against the consumption of all shark species by children, pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, and nursing women because of the threat of mercury contamination. It is irresponsible to encourage the consumption of shark meat when it poses such a danger to the public.