

Appendix B. Tagging Stick Instructions* – Stainless Steel Dart Tag

Stainless Steel Dart Tag

The “SS” series tag is recommended for large fish (26-28 inches or larger); i.e. adult red drum, black drum, and cobia. The tag consists of orange tubing (5.75 inches long) bearing the tag number on both ends. It is attached to a sharp, pointed metal anchor. A special stainless steel applicator, glued into a hole drilled in the end of a wooden dowel or pole, holds the dart tip in place during the tagging procedure.



How to Apply the “SS” Tag

1. Bring or guide the fish alongside the boat. One person should hold the leader.
2. If you can reasonably net the fish, ease the fish into the boat, keeping it in the net if possible. Lay the fish over a flat ruler or on a measuring board to get as good a straight total length as practical. If fish is too large to net then see below for method of tagging it in the water.
3. Very Large Fish - The tagger should be positioned slightly behind the fish to get a good angle for tagging.
4. The tag should be “harpooned” into the dorsal muscle (back) area of the fish at a 45-degree angle to allow the tag to lay beside the bottom edge of the dorsal fin as it swims.
5. A good estimate of the fish’s length should be made before it is released.
6. Record the information on the tag card/sheet before tagging another fish.

How to construct a tagging pole for “SS” series tags

Tagging poles are usually made from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1-inch diameter wooden dowels. Poles of varying length are needed depending on the type fish intended to be tagged and whether you will be tagging from a boat with low or high freeboard.

Tagging fish from a pier or the beach works best with a tagging stick 6-10” long (possibly attached to your belt). A handy trick is to cut a V notch in the opposite end of the stick to assist in removing hooks from thrashing fish.

To mount the tag applicator in the tagging pole, drill a $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch hole exactly 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep being careful that the hole is perfectly aligned with the pole. Place a small amount of strong bonding glue (epoxy works well) in the hole and on the base of the applicator.

Holding the applicator in the middle of its length with vise grips or pliers, center the large end over the hole, driving the applicator exactly 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch down into the pole by hammering on the pliers or vise grips NOT ON THE APPLICATOR.

Hammering on the end of the applicator will close the slot for the tag and usually breaks the applicator.

* Adapted from South Carolina Gamefish Tagging Program.