

Public Information

Weever Fish

a potentially nasty hazard for bathers!



The Facts

- 1 It is found all round the British coast, but only in sandy areas where the water is warm and shallow. A small number of people are stung each year off the North Cornwall shore.
- 2 There are 5 - 7 poisonous spines protruding from its black fin on its back and there are two more poisonous spines on each gill cover. These spines are to deter would be predators.
- 3 The Lesser Weever fish is only likely to be encountered at the low water mark where the fish buries itself in the sand leaving only its head and back exposed. It lies as inconspicuous as possible in order to surprise its prey.
- 4 You won't see a Weever fish but you will know it's there if you are unfortunate enough to stand on one. The sting can be very, very painful but will not cause permanent damage - the best treatment is hot water - as hot as you can tolerate and for as long as it takes for the pain to subside.
- 5 To avoid the chance of being stung, it is advisable to wear beach shoes / wet-suit boots when in the sea at low water.

This leaflet has been produced by the
North Cornwall Coast and Countryside Service
For further information please contact us on 01208 265644



Weever Fish

The Fish

Two species of Weever are found in British waters, the Greater Weever (*Trachinus draco*) which can reach 40cm in length and lives in deep water; and the more commonly reported Lesser Weever (*Echiichthys vipera*) which grows up to 14cm long - it is this one which can be a problem at our sandy beaches.

The Lesser Weever emerges from the sand and is active during the night. It feeds on smaller sand dwelling creatures, including, crustaceans, amphidods, isopods, shrimps and young crabs as well as small fish, such as gobies.

The Weever fish looking as inconspicuous as possible, lying in wait for prey and warding off any potential predators with its fin of poisonous spines.



The Sting

- The sting feels at first like a sharp stab but this pain increases quickly for up to an hour and has been known to last for up to 24 hours. It is therefore important to treat the sting quickly with hot water and always ensure that the puncture is clean.
- The venom produced is a nerve poison and has a chemical in it which is one of the most potent pain producing substances known.
- The heat helps to breakdown the poison but it also increases blood flow to the sting causing natural cleaning and healing. The wound itself is pretty unimpressive for such a painful ordeal.
- Most popular beaches have a staffed First Aid point and help and advice can be sought there. Seek medical advice if you have any concerns following a Weever fish sting.



The Polzeath Voluntary Marine Wildlife Area aims to promote marine awareness whilst increasing peoples enjoyment of the area. For further information on marine conservation, contact the Polzeath Marine Wildlife Warden on 01208 863181 or the North Cornwall Coast & Countryside Service on 01208 893333