
REVIEWED

Cabin Fever



The Surtees 700 Gamefisher is feature-packed fishing machine perfect for extended trips or long runs offshore. **Mark Ward** reports.

NEIL Surtees was a mad keen angler who fished New Zealand's Bay of Plenty. In the early 1990s Neil built himself a boat. It didn't take long for a number of local anglers to ask if he was interested in building another. The rest is history.

In only a few short years, Surtees Boats grew to become the biggest alloy boat manufacturer in New Zealand and is now known across the world for its innovative design and quality.

It's almost a cliché to say a particular boat is built by fishermen for fishermen, but in the case of Surtees, this cliché has never been truer.

Surtees has recently upgraded its range of

fishing boats and changed the names to represent the overall length (LOA). With more deck space, and still with the famous Surtees hull design, the very popular 6.7 Gamefisher is now the 700 Gamefisher. I was lucky enough to get on the water with the boys from Brisbane's Northside Marine in the 700 enclosed cab Gamefisher.

Due to a cold winter westerly blowing, the enclosed cab was very welcome indeed. While not great for fishing, the wind chop across Moreton Bay was ideal for testing how the 700 handled lumpy conditions.

The hull

It's difficult to think of a better fishing hull design than a Surtees. The hull has a 20 degree deadrise to cut through the swell and chop, but to balance the hull at rest, ballast tanks holding 380 litres of water sit below the waterline, making the 700 one of the most stable boats in its class.

Add to this a fully welded six stringer system of 6mm alloy capped with a fully welded checker plate deck and you have a smooth riding, stable hull that is built to handle pretty much anything.



The ballast tanks will fill in just a few seconds once the Surtees comes to a stop and drain just as quickly. If the weather gets really nasty, a shut off flap can be activated to keep the water in the hull. This provides almost 400kgs of extra weight where it counts, down low in the hull with more towards the bow. It's amazing the difference that this makes. There is a slight decrease in performance, however, it's unlikely you'd want to be travelling at full noise in rough conditions anyway so the loss of power shouldn't even be noticed.



MAIN IMAGE: Chasing fish out wide has never been easier in a boat like this.

LEFT: Yamaha's latest four-cylinder 200hp four-stroke is far lighter than its V6 predecessor yet almost as powerful.

BELOW: While the Surtees 700 Gamefisher is a serious fishing boat, it also has plenty of family-friendly features, making overnight stays possible.



Lay Out

The Surtees 700 is a hard-core fishing vessel but it has all the comforts of home. The cabin is fully enclosed with a solid locking door, making the Gamefisher ideal for weekends on the water or even extended stays. The fully lined cabin has plenty of room to sleep two and can be fitted out with either a portable or electronic toilet. The test vessel even had a flat screen TV fitted!

A mini galley is located just outside the cabin, which includes a sink with a hot water option, single burner gas stove, and a fridge that is neatly housed under the skipper's chair. There are plenty of storage areas for gas bottles and cooking gear including sliding draws in the seat mounts. I don't think you can ever get too much storage in a boat designed for extended or overnight stays so it's great to see the use of space in the Surtees.

The deck features a wash down and shower.

The test boat was fitted with the hot water option and even the roughest of blokes would admit to loving a warm shower after a big day on the water. And let's not forget that the wife may need to sign off on major purchases like a new boat The test boat also had a non-slip floor cover to help keep the feet dry.

As expected, 700 Gamefisher also had a fishing department. The deck space is huge with big, full-length side pockets and dry storage compartments built into the gunwale. There were a total of 23 rod holders including those on the bait board and rocket launcher. Rod storage shouldn't be an issue on this boat ...

The walk-thru transom is fitted with a berley pot, boarding ladder and swim boards. The test boat was powered by a single outboard, however twin pods can be requested for a dual outboard set-up. The transom also houses a good-sized bait board, tackle trays (which are enclosed in a water tight compartment) and a nifty leader feeder for quick re-rigs.

Whether you prefer bottom bashing, trolling or even casting slugs at schools of gamefish, the big, well-appointed deck will have you covered. Outriggers can easily be fitted for trolling.

Performance

Spacious yet cosy is the best way to describe the helm of the 700. Thanks to the fully enclosed cabin, a heater could easily be fitted. Ditto with an aircon for tropical climates.

With the door closed it felt as though we were chugging gently along but we were actually cruising at over 26 knots. The big glass windscreen and dash were ideal for a serious fishing boat like this. It was good to see there was more than enough room for electronics.

The helm chair was comfortable. When adjusted correctly, everything was in easy reach and I was able to sit back and let the hull do all the work.

The Surtees was fitted with the newly designed Yamaha F200XB four-stroke outboard. This is the new in-line four-cylinder engine as opposed to the V6 engine block. The new 200hp four-stroke is more than 50kgs lighter than the



With a 20 degree deadrise and tough alloy build, the 700 is a capable offshore fishing boat.

Surtees 700 Gamefisher

LOA: 7.0m

BEAM: 2.39m

WEIGHT: 1060kg (dry hull only)

TOWING WEIGHT: 1950kg (dry)

FUEL: 280lt

POWER: 140hp-250hp (as tested 200hp)

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previous V6 model, which makes a huge difference. Interestingly, performance is very similar. In actual fact, top speed and cruising speeds are too close to call between the engines. As expected, the extra cylinders on the V6 does provide a little more down low grunt.

The slim appearance makes the in-line four ideal for twin rig set ups, which would also save on more than 100kg of weight compared to the V6 models. I have to admit to wondering what the hell Yamaha was thinking when it dropped two cylinders and decreased displacement with the new 200, but I have to admit to being wrong and I'm now a huge fan of these high-tech outboards.

The Yammie pushed the 7m Gamefisher along at 30 knots at only 4400 revs and was able to be opened up to move at just under 37 knots in smooth water. That's impressive for a boat of this size and proves once again that the four cylinder matches the V6, especially for top end speed.

Overall, my time in the 700 leads me to think that Surtees has combined a great hull design with everything needed in a long-range fishing machine. There is a pile of options to get the set-up you're after with the test boat being priced at \$130,786 delivered and ready to fish. BMT prices start from \$102,315 for an open cabin 700 Gamefisher.

