

Friday, December 18, 2009

BIOSECURITY PROTOCOLS VITAL IN ABALONE DISEASE BATTLE

Fisheries Victoria is once again urging divers, anglers, boat operators, surfers and anyone else in the water along Victoria's south-west coastline to observe the abalone biosecurity protocols over the summer holiday period.

The Executive Director Fisheries Victoria, Anthony Hurst, says it is important to remind water users of the protocols to minimise the risk of spreading the disease, known as Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis.

Although the disease is abating in some reefs first affected more than three years ago it has now been detected further to the east at Cape Otway.

Divers, fishers and boaters are encouraged to:

- **Wash** vessels, wetsuits, dive equipment and hands with soapy freshwater;
- **Remove** all marine organic matter from vessels and equipment; and
- **Dispose** of abalone shell, meat and gut with their household waste and do not use abalone gut as fishing bait.

"The disease poses no known or likely impacts to human health but we are asking locals and summertime visitors to observe these protocols to help minimise the risk of spreading the disease to unaffected stretches of the coast.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will continue its efforts to implement the National Abalone Health plan as the primary response to the disease which includes work on epidemiology, biosecurity and stock sustainability.

The plan is well underway and is backed by a \$600,000 grant from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

The CEO of Seafood Industries Victoria, Ross McGowan is encouraging all commercial fishers to observe industry protocols and to avoid areas known to be affected by the disease.

Chair of VRFish, Geoff Cramer, said it was particularly important with the upcoming holiday period for recreational fishers and holidaymakers to observe the biosecurity protocols.

Foreshore abalone biosecurity signs will be maintained at major beach access points and expanded along the Cape Otway coast.

For more information about the abalone biosecurity protocols visit ww.dpi.vic.gov.au/abalonedisease where a detailed video illustrating the recreational protocols can be viewed.

Fishers and divers can also call 136 186 for a free, water-resistant abalone pocket card.