

ATTENTION ROCK LOBSTER FISHERS

Some Simple Cleaning Can Help Prevent the Spread of Marine Diseases

A disease affecting abalone in Victoria has resulted in significant impact on the Western Zone of the Victorian commercial abalone fishery.

The event in Victoria has highlighted the importance of cleaning and hygiene in reducing the spread of aquatic diseases. Recently the virus was confirmed in abalone at Portland, 40km west of the previously documented occurrence. The current view is that this spread of the disease was the result of poor biosecurity practice such as using contaminated abalone offal for bait or inadequate cleaning of equipment.

The Tasmanian DPIW is currently conducting a comprehensive review and risk assessment of the Tasmanian abalone industry including the catching, processing and aquaculture sectors. While this review will focus on the abalone fishery, practices in other fisheries may be identified as a disease risk.

The Department and the Tasmanian Abalone Council have asked divers and processors to adopt some cleaning and disinfecting protocols as a part of their daily routine when fishing and receiving fish.

DPI Victoria have asked Victorian Rock lobster fishers to adopt some protocols that will minimise the potential spread of the disease in the marine environment through commercial rock lobster fishing. The situation in Victoria is extremely grave as the disease is in the environment and spreading. The disease **has not been found in Tasmania**. However, this outbreak has highlighted the threat posed to fisheries by disease and the need for improved practices across commercial and recreational fisheries.

What You Can Do Now

- ◆ When pots are to be relocated to new fishing grounds ensure they are clean and that organic material is removed. A strong deck hose should remove most organic material. If pots are obviously fouled they can be easily disinfected by spraying with disinfectant and thoroughly rinsed.
- ◆ Decks and equipment should be regularly hosed down to avoid the build up of dirt and organic material. The use of detergents, misters or high-pressure water cleaners will greatly improve this process.

Suitable detergents include those used for washing trucks or specifically designed for cleaning boats and are available from a number of suppliers. These compounds are not classified as hazardous and are normally bio-degradable;

The cheapest disinfectant to use is Calcium Hypochlorite, which is available from any swimming pool shop and dairy factories. It comes in a powder form and the dilution used is 7g/litre. The solution should be made up freshly each day. It can be diluted with Seawater.

Most vessels will already have much of the necessary equipment on board such as brushes, brooms and scrapers.

In addition the following items should be considered.

- Misters and low pressure sprayers – useful for applying detergents and disinfectants to surfaces.
- High volume pumps – particularly useful for rinsing, as they are good for thoroughly wetting or rinsing equipment.
- High-Pressure Water Cleaners (HPWC). Useful for all stages of cleaning and disinfection. Highly efficient at dislodging most types of gross soiling.

A little effort now may save a lot of pain later

For additional information on decontamination or biosecurity issues:

Please call Andrew Sharman (03) 6233 3512 or 0408 131 204

