

Alive and kicking

Best practice handling of live mud crabs for harvesters

The Queensland Government has developed best practice guidelines for the handling and storage of mud crabs from harvest to table. These guidelines were developed as a way to reduce the stress levels of muddies, decrease mortality after harvest and to increase the eating quality of the catch.

This fact sheet provides key information on the handling, sorting and storage of live mud crabs **for harvesters** before transport.

At catch

- Confirm legal size, sex and not berried as per state/territory regulations.
- Return newly moulted crabs to water. These are prone to stress and do not tolerate transport and temperature changes at all.
- Dispose of any contaminated, badly damaged, deformed, diseased or parasitic crabs.
- Tie crab's claws hard against the body to restrict movement as soon as possible. This minimises crab stress, aggression and damage to other crabs and handlers.
- Hold in clean, damp hessian-lined crates to limit disturbance, minimise moisture loss and stop direct breeze and sunlight affecting the crabs.

Sorting crabs

- Apply care when legs are caught in basket. pulling on legs can cause bleeding which increases likelihood of death.
- Remove weak, slow or bleeding crabs. These may be revived using a recovery procedure.
- Dead crabs are a health risk to the crabs around them. Remove these immediately.



During storage

- Keep temperature constant. Avoid large changes in temperature (10°C either way). Let crabs adjust slowly to new temperatures and hold at around 18°C to 25°C.
- Air conditioning can dry crabs out - but may be used to avoid very high temperatures.
- Avoid exposure to sunlight and breeze. Wind and breeze cause death.
- Minimise moisture loss - use damp hessian to line and cover crates.
- Ensure crates are insect proof - watch for flies.
- Limit any loud noises as these will cause increased stress.
- Handle gently - disturb as little as possible.
- Crabs held out of water for more than 5 days will benefit from a recovery step (see Recovery Procedure Fact Sheet).

More information

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