

White spot disease

28 March 2017

Frequently asked questions

[Information on white spot disease](#)

What is white spot disease?

White spot disease is a highly contagious viral disease of decapod crustaceans including prawns, crabs, yabbies and lobsters and marine worms. White spot disease is caused by white spot syndrome virus.

Where has white spot disease been found in Queensland?

White spot disease was originally detected in an aquaculture pond in the Logan River region and then subsequently in the Logan River, and has now been detected near the Redcliffe Peninsula and Deception Bay area in Queensland.

How does it kill prawns?

The virus infects a wide variety of cells within the prawn. These cells become necrotic and disintegrate and the infected prawns suffer organ breakdown and eventually die.

How is white spot disease spread?

The disease is primarily spread through the movement of infected animals or water. Birds feeding on infected animals can contribute to the spread of the disease.

Can fish spread the virus?

No. Fish are not carriers of the virus that causes white spot disease.

How was the disease introduced to Queensland prawn farms?

At this stage, it is not known how the disease was introduced to this area. Biosecurity Queensland is investigating a number of possible pathways. However, our priority at this stage is to contain and eradicate the disease.

How did white spot get into Australia?

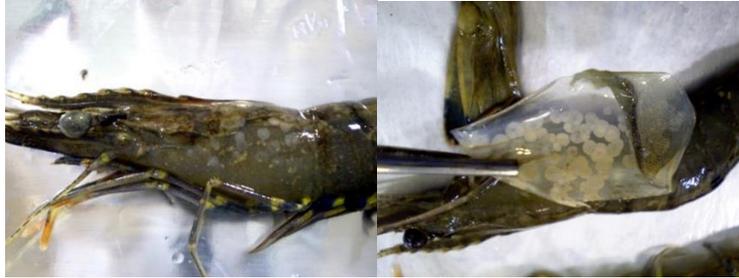
Biosecurity Queensland is investigating a range of possible pathways for the introduction of the virus into South East Queensland.

What does white spot disease look like?

Prawns with white spot disease may have a loose shell with numerous white spots (0.5-2.0mm in diameter) on the inside surface of the shell and a pink to red discolouration.



White spot disease



Prawns infected with white spot disease can be difficult to identify. They may develop visible white spots rapidly but it is important to note that these spots are not always present and that similar spots can be caused by other factors such as bacteria, high alkalinity and stress.

While other crustaceans such as crabs can be carriers of white spot disease, they may not display any visible signs and must not be moved from the movement control area.

Does it kill other crustaceans such as yabbies, crabs or fish, or just prawn?

Other crustaceans are susceptible carriers, however to date mortalities in Australia have only been seen in prawns.

Does freezing kill white spot?

No.

Does cooking kill white spot?

Yes. Cooking them in boiling water for between three-and-a-half minutes and four-and-a-half minutes depending on the size of the prawn will inactivate the virus.

Is it safe to eat prawns with white spot disease?

Yes.

What does it mean for the future of wild prawn stocks?

There is very little evidence on the impact on wild populations overseas. Although we know they can become infected, the likelihood of infested crustaceans dying in the wild is lower than in farmed animals.

What is Department of Agriculture and Fisheries doing to stop the spread of white spot?

Biosecurity Queensland has implemented a movement control order which extends from Caloundra to the New South Wales border, following the eastern coasts of Bribie, Moreton and Stradbroke Island.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is also undergoing an eradication program on farms and properties and are conducting ongoing surveillance outside the movement control area to determine if the disease is present in other areas.

White spot disease

What can the public do to help contain it?

Early notification, particularly outside the movement control area is essential. If you suspect white spot disease, take a photo, note the location and time you found it and refrigerate or freeze the sample.

Movement Control Order

What area does the movement control order cover?

The area extends from Caloundra to the New South Wales border following a 100 metre line off the eastern coasts of Bribie, Moreton and Stradbroke Islands. It extends west to encompass the western borders of Gold Coast City Council, Brisbane City Council and Moreton Bay Regional Councils.

What are movement restrictions in the movement control area?

The movement control order prohibits the movement of uncooked crustaceans such as prawns, crabs, yabbies and also marine worms out of the movement control area.

The use of equipment such as trawl nets, cast nets, crab pots and yabby pumps will continue to be allowed in the movement control area. However, anyone wishing to remove white spot syndrome virus carriers (such as crustaceans) from the movement control area must cook them within the movement control area before they are moved.

How will the movement control order prevent the spread of the disease?

The movement control order will minimise the risk that human movement will contribute to the spread of the disease.

How long will it be in place?

The movement control order is valid three months and will be reviewed periodically and updated depending on surveillance outcomes.

Can I carry crustaceans through the movement control area?

Yes, as long as they are cooked or contained within a commercially sealed package for their journey through the movement control area.

Can I go fishing in Moreton Bay?

Yes, but if you catch any crustaceans (including crabs and prawns) or marine worms they must not be removed from the movement control area unless cooked.

What can I catch?

All permitted species under the current rules (consult Fisheries Regulation 2008 for the latest recreational fishing rules or visit www.fisheries.qld.gov.au) can be caught within the movement control area. As mentioned above, if caught, crustaceans (including crabs and prawns) and marine worms cannot be removed from the movement control area (unless cooked).



White spot disease

Can I use green uncooked prawns from outside the movement control area as bait?

Yes. However, it is prohibited to remove prawns from the movement control area, so once a bait prawn package is opened, all prawns must remain in the area.

An unopened commercially sealed package of prawns can be brought into the movement control area and if not opened, it can be taken out of the area.

Who can I contact if I catch a crab or prawn outside of the movement control area that I suspect has white spot disease?

Suspect cases of white spot disease can be reported to Biosecurity Queensland through the [white spot disease online reporting tool](#) on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website or by calling Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

People who suspect white spot disease should contact Biosecurity Queensland immediately. The following information will be required:

- Type of crustacean seen, caught or purchased with signs of white spot disease
- Date the suspect crustacean was seen, caught or purchased
- Where the suspect crustacean was seen, caught or purchased
- Signs of white spot disease observed

Where possible take a photo of the suspect crustacean and refrigerate or freeze a sample as we may require it for further inspection (excluding regulated crabs).

Can I use crab pots, cast nets and yabby pumps in the movement control area?

Yes, however all equipment should be cleaned thoroughly if they are removed from the movement control area.

What do I have to do with my existing crabs and prawns?

Existing crustaceans, prawns and marine worms can be sold locally within the movement control area but cannot be moved from the area unless cooked first.

