

Best practice...from lease to market

Bivalve shellfish species (oysters, mussels and clams etc) are classified as a high risk food group as they are often eaten raw with the gut intact. To protect the consumer, the NSW Food Authority limits when and where shellfish can be collected for commercial harvest and how they are distributed to the consumer. The legal requirements for commercial shellfish—including local harvest area management, labelling, storage, and distribution methods to ensure consumer safety—are set out in Food Regulation 2010, which the Authority administers.

Licensing requirements

All shellfish farmers growing or collecting shellfish for sale must be licensed by the NSW Food Authority. This also includes all spat farmers. Vehicles must also be licensed. If you use a vehicle to distribute or transport stock for sale please contact the Authority's licensing department to register your vehicle.

Prior to harvest

Always check that your harvest area is officially 'open' prior to harvest. This can be done by either contacting your local coordinator, checking your local estuary system (usually a flag or local area message bank system) or contacting the NSW Shellfish Program. Each estuary may have a combination of these information systems and you should check with your local coordinator if in doubt. The NSW Shellfish Program sends out an SMS message when a change in harvest area status occurs, however this is **not** to be relied upon as the sole source of information, as coordinators may close an area on a weekend and the Authority may not be able to send out an SMS until Monday morning.

During harvest

Keep accurate records in your Product Record (PR) book of time, date, harvest area, salinity and species of stock you have collected. These records are audited by the Authority every six months.

Back at the sheds

To reduce bacterial growth and contamination of stock it is highly recommended that you wash your stock with clean water under pressure to remove all mud and silt from the shells.

Keep stock in a clean, dry place which is not affected by sunlight or heat as these will increase bacterial growth in the shellfish. There are also mandatory storage temperature requirements that must be adhered to. Please refer to the *NSW Shellfish Industry Manual*.

Remove all dead stock before distribution.

Keep domestic animals away from stock to prevent any contamination.

Depuration and wet storage

Any stock that you depurate or maintain in wet storage must comply with the *NSW Shellfish Industry Manual*. All shellfish collected from a restricted harvest area must undergo a 36-hour depuration process.

Bagging and labelling

All stock must be placed in clean bags which are clearly labelled. Labels must not be able to be easily removed or torn off and information written on labels or bags must be permanent. This is important in the event that you need to recall your stock for reasons such as high post tests or biotoxin events.

Testing stock prior to sale

Stock that undergoes a depuration process must be tested as per the *NSW Shellfish Industry Manual*. The water used in the depuration tank may also require testing. Please refer to the *NSW Shellfish Industry Manual* for specific requirements.

Product that is harvested from an approved harvest area does not need to be tested, **providing** your local shellfish committee is complying with the harvest area management plan testing regime.

More information

Please contact the Authority if you have any queries about your licensing requirements.

- refer to the *NSW Shellfish Industry Manual* and accompanying guidelines
- visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

Note

This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).