

Relay and translocation of shellfish

Bivalve shellfish species (oysters, mussels and clams) feed by filtering large volumes of water. If the shellfish are living in water which contains microbiological or chemical contaminants, or natural toxins, they will concentrate this material in their gut. As people normally eat shellfish raw, and without removing the gut, they are likely to become ill if product is harvested from contaminated areas.

To protect the consumer, the NSW Food Authority limits when and where shellfish can be collected for commercial harvest. The legal requirements for commercial shellfish harvesting—including the food safety requirements for transferring shellfish between harvest areas, and the use of translocation and relaying—is set out in Food Regulation 2010 which the Authority administers.

Translocation food safety requirements

Translocation is the movement of shellfish:

- *from* areas where harvest is not permitted (unclassified, nursery, prohibited or classified harvest area in the closed status)
- *into* a classified shellfish harvest area in the open status.

Translocated shellfish must be left in the new classified area **for at least 60 days** before they are harvested. This gives the translocated shellfish time to naturally depurate (cleanse) themselves of any pollutants.

Translocated shellfish should be placed in lots, in a separate area of the farm, so they do not pollute stock already on the farm. The translocated lots need to be clearly identified so there is no possibility of harvesting them before the 60-day cleansing period is up.

The farmer must keep accurate records in the Stock Movement diary with full details on the quantities and species of shellfish translocated, along with when and where they were moved.

Relaying food safety requirements

'Relaying' is the transfer of shellfish between classified areas to reduce contaminants in the shellfish and make them fit for human consumption.

Shellfish can be relayed:

- *from* classified harvest areas with minimal pollution levels (classified conditionally restricted in the open status)
- *to* cleaner waters (conditionally approved in the open status).

Each lot must be clearly identified and placed in a separate area to prevent cross contamination.

The relayed shellfish must be kept in the new location **for at least 14 days** before they can be harvested,

and must be harvested in accordance with the harvest area management plan.

As environmental conditions such as water temperature and salinity can affect the ability of the shellfish to naturally cleanse, the Authority may require farmers to regularly monitor the environment. Such conditions will be advised in writing to the operator.

Records to be kept

Any business that relays or translocates shellfish must keep records in a Stock Movement diary. This ensures that all shellfish can be traced back to their original growing area, and their time in the destination harvest area is recorded.

The following records must be kept up to date:

- name of the harvest area from which the shellfish were relayed
- date and time at which the shellfish were relayed from the harvest area
- name of the harvest area to which the shellfish were relayed
- date and time at which the shellfish were relayed to the harvest area
- species of shellfish relayed and the quantity of each species relayed

More information

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

- see the Authority's factsheet *Classification of shellfish harvest areas*.
- 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).