

Food safety and biosecurity guidelines for wet storage of shellfish at wholesale

Introduction

Wet storage is a shelf-life extension process where previously harvested shellfish are re-immersed in water to store, remove sand or improve condition.

The wet storage of shellfish poses unique and significant food safety and biosecurity risks, and these must be considered when installing and implementing wet storage processes. Proper construction, operation and maintenance of wet storage systems is crucial to safe wet storage of shellfish. Careful consideration of disposal of water and shellfish within wet storage systems may pose aquatic biosecurity risks.

It is important to note that wet storage does not constitute depuration. The two processes are uniquely different and require different approval processes.

Current requirements

Challenging climatic conditions experienced across NSW over the past couple of years has been a driver for the increased interest and approvals of wet storage systems. Wet storage is a licenced activity with the NSW Food Authority and licenced businesses must have:

- this approval listed on their Food Authority licence, and
- have the wet storage tank facility assessed and approved prior to conducting wet storage of shellfish.

Licence application form [LIC006](#) can be completed to apply to have wet storage listed on a current Food Authority licence.

Once a licence application has been received, the NSW Shellfish Program will assess the wet storage facility for approval. There are number of manufacturers providing wet storage system options. It's important to note that no wet storage systems are pre-approved ("off the shelf") at this stage. Current requirements can be found in the [NSW Shellfish Industry Manual](#), businesses will also need an [appropriate food safety plan](#).

Businesses are encouraged to discuss options at the design phase to ensure compliance with current and proposed requirements. This will avoid unnecessary costs to modify systems in the future.

Proposed requirements

A wet storage working group consisting of NSW Food Authority, Aquatic Biosecurity and NSW Shellfish Committee industry members are working towards development and recommendation of a single set of formal legislative requirements covering both food safety and biosecurity requirements. It is anticipated that these new legislative measures will be implemented, with consultation and supporting documentation by 30 June 2023. Once these requirements are finalised the NSW Shellfish Program will commence wet storage facility inspections to ensure wet storage systems meet the amended requirements.

What to do

If your business operates a wet storage system, you **must** have wet storage listed on your NSW Food Authority licence **and** have your system approved by the NSW Shellfish Program.

Contact the NSW Food Authority on the details above if you are unsure if your business is licensed or to check if your wet storage system has been approved.

Until these proposed new measures are finalised, existing wet storage systems must follow current biosecurity movement rules (e.g. POMS and QX restrictions) and must not be used to hold products originating outside of NSW without approval from NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity.

More information

To discuss wet storage systems options at the design phase, contact the NSW Shellfish Program on (02) 6552 3000 (option 2) or at food.nswsp@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

To discuss biosecurity considerations, please contact NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity on (02) 4916 3900 or at aquatic.biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

The NSW Food Authority is the regulator and source of truth for food safety in NSW, underpinned by science in an evidence-based approach from paddock to plate.

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

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