

# RETAIL HANDLING OF LIVE UNOPENED SHELLFISH

Commercial shellfish businesses must ensure the shellfish they produce or handle are safe to eat and correctly identified.

## What are shellfish?

Shellfish are bivalve molluscs, such as oysters, mussels, clams, pipis and cockles.

## Potential hazards of shellfish

Shellfish filter microscopic particles from seawater to find their food. If harmful substances (e.g. biotoxins and microorganisms) are present in the water shellfish can accumulate them to dangerous levels.

Biotoxins are harmful substances produced by some types of algae. They can cause illnesses ranging from diarrhoea to severe respiratory and neurological problems.

Harmful microorganisms, such as viruses and bacteria, may enter waterways, especially after heavy rainfall. They can cause illnesses such as hepatitis and diarrhoea.

## Buying shellfish

Shellfish must only be bought from licensed seafood businesses. It is illegal to buy shellfish from recreational fisherman.

Unless you are licensed to grow or collect shellfish, it is illegal to catch and sell your own shellfish.

Commercial shellfish businesses are licensed by the NSW Food Authority and are required to comply with the Food Regulation 2015. The Food Authority can then make sure the business has a system in place to control the hazards associated with shellfish harvesting.

## Handling and storing shellfish

Live shellfish should be stored in a dry, cool environment. The recommended temperature for storage will depend on the species.

For example:

- Sydney Rock oysters should be stored between 10°C and 21°C
- Pacific oysters between 5°C and 10°C
- Mussels and pipis between 5°C and 10°C

Your seafood supplier can provide further advice on the correct storage temperatures.

Shellfish must not be stored directly on the floor and must be protected from contamination by other foods.

Once shellfish are shucked or opened, they must be stored under refrigeration at less than 5°C. Some shellfish are supplied frozen and then thawed for sale. Thawed shellfish must also be stored under refrigeration at less than 5°C.

## Storing shellfish in water tanks

The Food Authority strongly recommends you do not store live shellfish in water because they will begin filtering the water and risk contamination. If you decide to store shellfish in water you must:

- not store them in the same tank as other seafood (e.g. fish, lobsters or crabs)
- only use water which is safe and has been tested
- attach a water steriliser (e.g. a UV light on the system. Traditional aquarium filters or protein slimmers are not sterilisers)



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- ensure the sterilised water enters the tank containing the shellfish first, and is then circulated through tanks containing other types of seafood, e.g. fish, lobster or crabs. Alternatively, a separate sterilised water supply can be used for shellfish.

Storing live shellfish in water requires specialised knowledge and you are strongly advised to seek expert assistance to develop and implement an appropriate food safety program.

### More information

- visit the NSW Food Authority's website at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

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).



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