

White spot

information guide

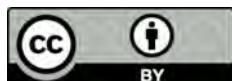


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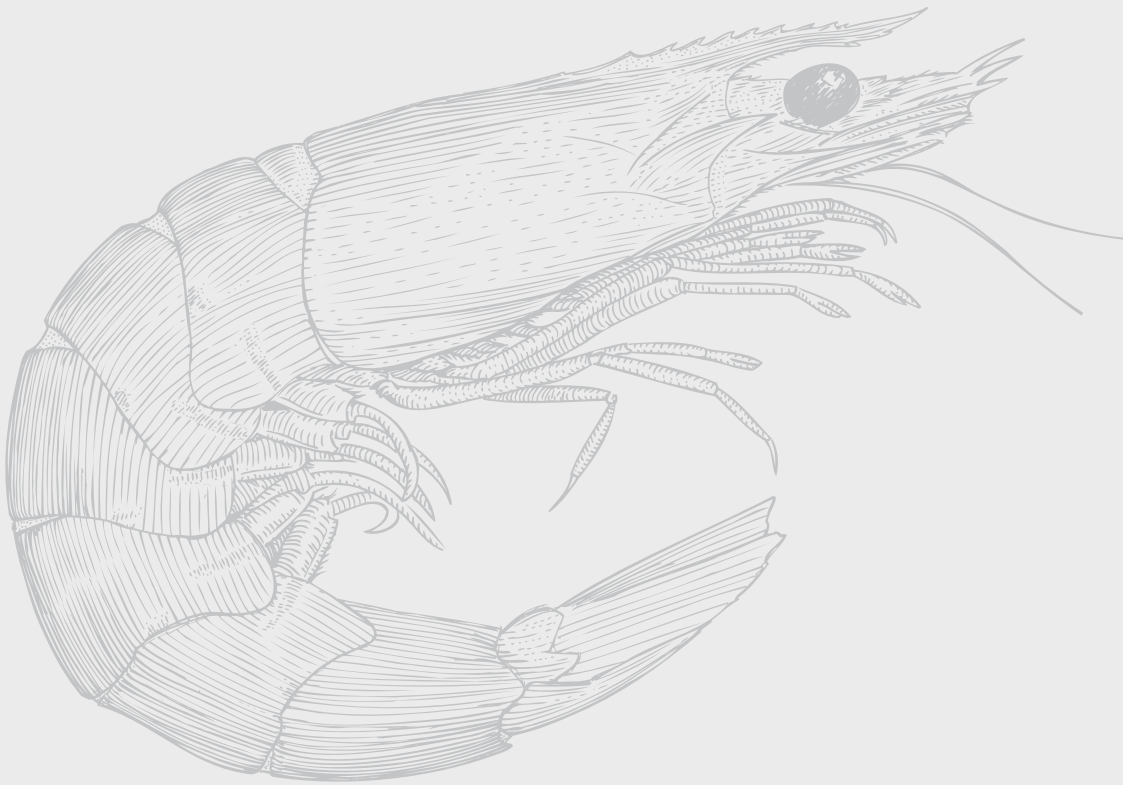
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White spot overview

About white spot

White spot is a highly contagious viral infection that affects crustaceans such as prawns, crabs and yabbies. When found in high intensity production areas, such as prawn farms, white spot results in the rapid mortality of prawns.

The white spot virus does not affect fish or other marine animals and is primarily spread by affected animals and contaminated water.

White spot is common in most areas in Asia and North and South America.

How to identify white spot in prawns

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



Reporting white spot

Suspected cases of white spot disease must be reported to Biosecurity Queensland immediately. Take note of the location and time and report this information to **Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23**.

White spot in Queensland

White spot has been confirmed in seven prawn farms located in the Logan River region. This is the first confirmed case of white spot disease in an aquaculture setting in Australia. A range of pathways are being investigated to better understand how the virus could have been introduced into South East Queensland.

Prawns infected with white spot do not pose a risk to people's health, and are completely safe to eat.



The white spot virus that causes white spot disease has also been found in a number of wild caught prawns and crabs taken from the Logan River region, Moreton Bay, Redcliffe Peninsula and Deception Bay.

Surveillance for white spot has been undertaken outside of these areas, along the East Coast of Queensland up to Cairns, and to date all prawns that have been tested have returned negative results for the white spot virus.

White spot movement restrictions

To reduce the likelihood of white spot spreading, movement restrictions are in place. This means that raw prawns, yabbies and marine worms cannot be removed from the restricted area which extends from Caloundra to the New South Wales border, following a line 100 metres off the eastern coasts of Bribie, Moreton and Stradbroke Islands.

Crustaceans, other than those now exempt, caught in the restricted area must stay within the area, unless they are cooked first as cooking destroys the virus that causes white spot.

The movement restrictions also apply to frozen, uncooked crustaceans as freezing does not destroy the virus.

Bait prawns (including freshly caught worms and yabbies) sourced from outside the restricted area can be used, however, once brought into the restricted area, they cannot be moved back out.

To ensure the ongoing health of our marine habitat, fishers should only use Australian wild-caught prawns as bait purchased from a local bait supplier. Imported, uncooked prawns may pose a risk for the introduction of exotic diseases such as white spot.

Exemption for crabs, lobsters and bugs

Crabs, lobsters and bugs are exempt from the movement restrictions and can be taken out of the restricted area. As these animals are caught and sold for the sole purpose of being eaten, the risk of them being returned to natural waterways and spreading the white spot virus is negligible.

The exemption applies to spanner crabs, three spotted crabs, blue swimmer crabs, mud crabs, red champagne lobsters, slipper lobsters, tropical rocklobsters, redclaws and bugs.

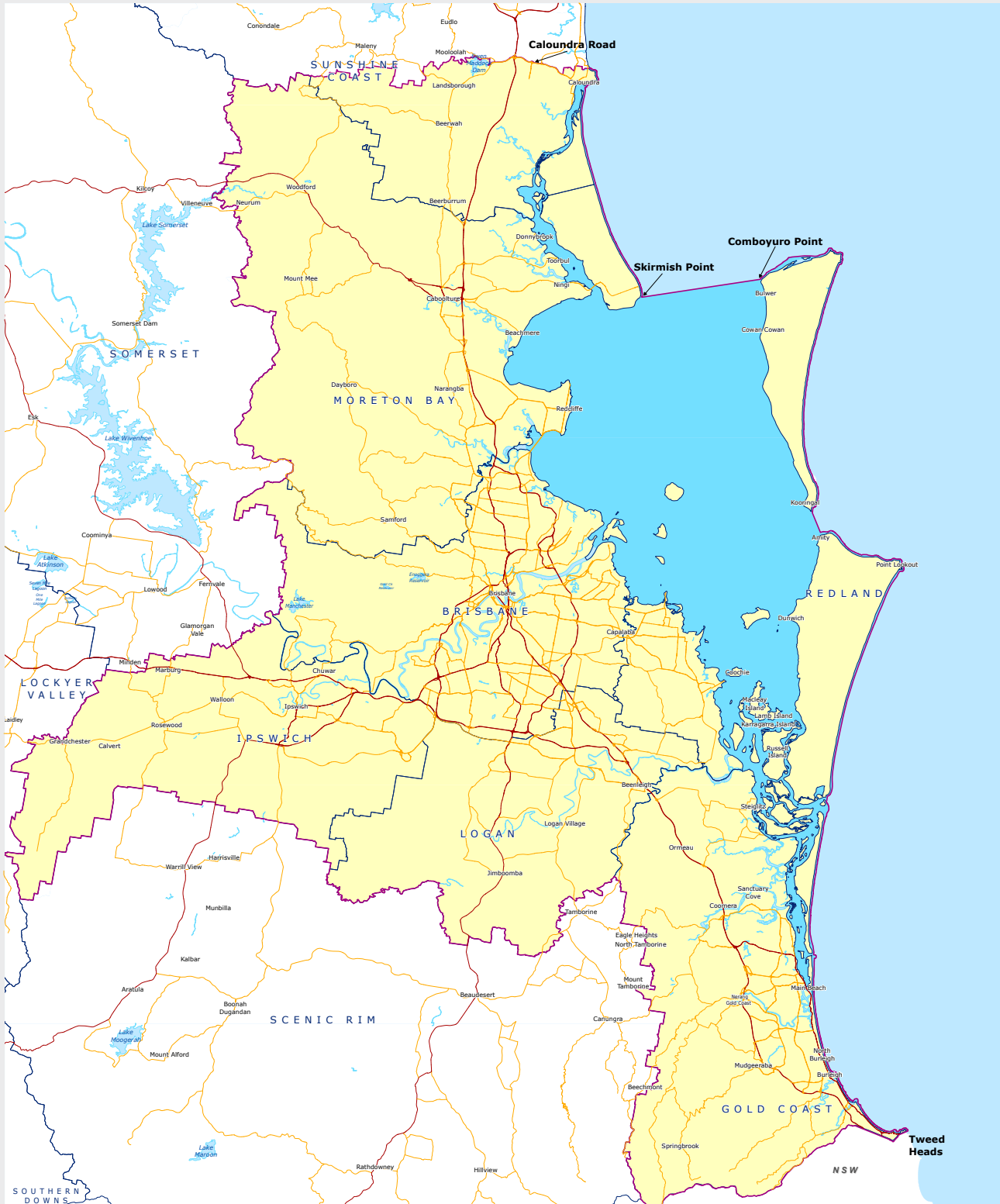
Anyone planning to move these species interstate must check the destination state's import requirements before moving them outside of Queensland.

Map of restricted area

The following items must not be removed from the restricted zone unless cooked first:

- Prawns
- Yabbies
- Marine worms

Penalties may apply to anyone who breaches these restrictions.



Map of the movement restriction area



Fishing restrictions

To help prevent further outbreaks of white spot in South East Queensland, fishing is prohibited within 100 metres of water intake and outlet channels and in drainage channels used by land-based prawn farms in the Gold Coast City Division 1/Coomera electorate district.

This includes line fishing and the use of other fishing equipment such as crab pots, cast nets and yabby pumps.

This applies to waterways surrounding prawn farms in Alberton, Coomera, Gilberton, Helensvale, Hope Island, Jacobs Well, Norwell, Ormeau, Pimpama, Southern Moreton Bay Islands, Stapylton, Steiglitz and Woongoolba.



Map of the restricted fishing area



Frequently asked questions

Is it safe to eat prawns with white spot disease?

Yes. White spot does not pose any human health or food safety concerns.

Does cooking kill white spot?

Yes. Cooking prawns or crabs in boiling water for between three-and-a-half and four-and-a-half minutes, depending on the size, will inactivate the virus.

Does freezing kill white spot?

No. Freezing does not kill the white spot virus.

How was white spot introduced to Queensland?

Biosecurity Queensland is investigating a number of possible pathways, however at this stage it is not known how the disease was introduced.

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

Determining what the impacts are on prawns in the wild is difficult to evaluate as there is little evidence about the effect of white spot on wild populations in overseas countries where this disease is considered endemic.

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

Biosecurity Queensland has implemented movement restrictions from Caloundra to the New South Wales border, following the eastern coasts of Bribie, Moreton and Stradbroke Island. These restrictions will reduce the likelihood of the disease spreading through human assisted movement.

Can fish spread the virus?

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

Why has all of Queensland been declared a biosecurity zone for white spot?

The biosecurity zone has been put in place to ensure the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries can act swiftly to contain a white spot incident should one occur elsewhere in the state.

Now that Queensland is considered a biosecurity zone, does that mean movement restrictions apply to all of Queensland?

No. Movement restrictions only apply to prawns, yabbies and marine worms that have been caught in the restricted area from Caloundra to the New South Wales border.

What is the exact area that movement restrictions apply?

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



What animals have movement restrictions placed on them?

Prawns, yabbies and marine worms must not be moved out of the restricted area unless cooked first.

Why are crabs, lobsters and bugs exempt from movement restrictions?

Crabs, lobsters and bugs are exempt from the movement restrictions as they are caught and sold for the sole purpose of being eaten, which means the risk of them being returned to natural waterways and spreading the white spot virus is low.

How will the movement restrictions prevent the spread of the disease?

Movement restrictions are in place to stop people moving infected animals and accidentally transporting the disease and introducing it to new areas.

How long will the restrictions be in place?

Movement and fishing restrictions will remain in place while they are still considered an effective means of control and containment for this disease. A minimum of two years surveillance with no positive results for the virus is needed to return Queensland to an internationally recognised white spot free status.

Can I take crustaceans out of the restricted area?

Yes, as long as they are cooked first.

Can I take the bait that I caught inside the restricted area out of the restricted area to go fishing?

No. You cannot take uncooked prawns or marine worms out of the restricted area. Prawns and marine worms caught inside the restricted area could carry the white spot virus. Anyone who takes bait from the restricted area and uses it in waterways outside the restricted area could inadvertently spread white spot.

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

Yes, however all equipment should be cleaned thoroughly before they are used outside the restricted area (refer to the 'decontamination of fishing apparatus and vessel' section of this guide on page 8).

Where do the fishing restrictions apply?

To help prevent further outbreaks of white spot in South East Queensland, fishing is prohibited within 100 metres of water intake and outlet channels and in drainage channels used by land-based prawn farms in the Gold Coast City Division 1/ Coomera electorate district.

This applies to waterways surrounding prawn farms in Alberton, Coomera, Gilberton, Helensvale, Hope Island, Jacobs Well, Norwell, Ormeau, Pimpama, Southern Moreton Bay Islands, Stapylton, Steiglitz and Woongoolba.

Who can I contact if I catch a crab or prawn 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** at www.daf.qld.gov.au/wsd or by calling Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23. Where possible take a photo of the suspect crustacean and refrigerate or freeze a sample, as it may be required for further inspection (excluding regulated crabs).



Decontamination of fishing apparatus and vessel

To minimise the risk of spreading the virus that causes white spot it is expected that before leaving the restricted area fishers follow this cleaning and decontamination procedure.

Usual cleaning and hygiene procedures are sufficient for vessels that are remaining in the restricted area or returning daily.

Place vessels in trailer or slip for decontamination to complete the following procedure effectively and to prevent contamination washing into waterways.

1.

Remove all gross fouling and organic matter from all boat surfaces and equipment by scraping, brushing or using a high-pressure water cleaner. Pay particular attention to nets to remove any dead prawn and crab material.

2.

Apply a suitable disinfectant solution to all surfaces and equipment for at least 10 minutes.

Note: A disinfectant solution with the active ingredient benzalkonium chloride should be mixed to a concentration of 75-100 mg/L.

Safety precaution: Ensure you follow the manufacturer's safety guide.

3.

Rinse all external areas with fresh water and allow to dry in direct sunlight.

4.

Vacuum all internal cabin areas thoroughly to remove any mud or soil. Wipe all surfaces, including floors, benchtops and seats with the disinfectant solution.

5.

Record the date the vessel and equipment were disinfected.



More information

For more information about white spot visit www.daf.qld.gov.au/wsd or call the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on 13 25 23.

To keep up-to-date with white spot news subscribe to our latest white spot e-Updates.

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