

# Reporting suspected disease in abalone

Aquatic Biosecurity and Risk Management

## Abalone viral ganglioneuritis

Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) is a viral disease which affects the nervous system of abalone and can result in curling of the foot, swelling of the mouth, weakness and death in abalone. AVG affects both blacklip and greenlip abalone and hybrids.

AVG was detected for the first time in NSW in a retail outlet in November 2011. AVG is not known to be present in any wild abalone stocks in NSW.

AVG is a notifiable disease in NSW, and live abalone holders (eg. processors, retail outlets and restaurants) are required by law to notify DPI of suspected disease in abalone.

**If you observe abalone which show signs of disease please report it immediately to the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Fishers Watch Hotline on 1800 043 536.**

NSW DPI will arrange and pay for the collection of any samples which are sent to the diagnostic lab for disease testing.

## Signs of sick abalone

Abalone infected with AVG may appear sickly, weak or have died. Other signs of the disease include one or more of the following:

- Protrusion of the mouth part.
- Edges of the foot curling inwards resulting in exposure of clean shiny shell around shell edges.
- Stiffness or rigidity of the abalone and/or the abalone can be easily removed from reef or holding tanks and does not right itself if inverted.
- In wild abalone stocks, the presence of fresh clean shells or shells containing partial abalone flesh may indicate recent mortalities.



*Diseased greenlip abalone displaying symptoms of AVG (Photo: DPI Victoria)*



*Diseased blacklip abalone displaying symptoms of AVG (Photo: DPI Victoria)*

## 1. Details to record if you observe sick abalone

If you observe suspected diseased abalone in a retail premise (or in the wild), record as many of the following details as possible:

- Names of suppliers and consignment details of abalone stock received within the previous 10 days.
- The area where the abalone was collected (state, reef name, GPS points, etc).
- The number and type (e.g. green, blacklip or hybrid) of abalone affected by disease.
- Your contact details.

Immediately report the occurrence to the **DPI Fishers Watch Hotline on 1800 043 536** and you will be advised on how to prepare abalone for disease testing.

If you have sick abalone in your premises, you should **isolate the tanks immediately stopping discharge of any water** unless water disposal is through sewer system.

## 2. Storing abalone for disease testing

- Collect up to 5 live sick abalone and if this is not possible, freshly dead abalone for disease testing.
- Place each sick and/or freshly dead abalone in separate/individual plastic bags in a cool place out of direct sunlight and refrigerate as soon as possible; **do not freeze**.

## 3. Packing abalone for disease testing

When you report diseased abalone to the DPI Fishers Watch Hotline, you will receive advice on how to pack and submit the abalone.

Abalone should be packed as follows:

- Place each abalone in an individual sealed plastic bag.
- No water should be in the bag with the abalone; however it should be moist when packaged.
- Allow some air (or oxygen if available) to remain in the bag. You may place this plastic bag in a second sealed bag to prevent water leaking.
- Place the plastic bags containing the abalone samples in an esky or foam box with ice or an ice brick.
- Include the name, address and phone number of the person submitting the samples in an envelope or plastic zip lock bag inside the esky or box and also attach a copy in an envelope or plastic zip lock bag to the outside of the esky or box.

- Ensure to also include the date and exact location where the abalone was collected (eg. the name of the retail premises, processor or reef).
- NSW DPI will give you instructions on how to fill in the lab submission form which can be found on the webpage [http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/77714/vet-specimen-submission-form.pdf](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/77714/vet-specimen-submission-form.pdf).

- **NSW DPI will arrange and pay for the collection of the samples by courier.** The packed samples should be addressed to:

State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory  
Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute  
'Camden Park'  
Woodbridge Road  
Menangle NSW 2568

**For more information on AVG and to minimise disease risks associated with abalone see:**

- **General hygiene to prevent spread of abalone disease**, NSW Department of Primary Industries Primefact 1146. This Primefact provides important information on preventing the spread of AVG by reducing risks that may be associated with transport vehicles, containers and any equipment which may come into contact with abalone.
- **The NSW DPI webpage:** <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/pests-diseases/animal-health/wildfish-shellfish>

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (June 2012). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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