

# **Let's work together to keep White spot disease out of NSW**

## **Recreational fishing closure adjacent to three prawn farms at Yamba**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is White spot disease?**

White spot disease is a highly contagious viral disease that infects numerous crustaceans, mainly prawns, and polychaete worms.

#### **Where does White spot disease come from?**

The disease is found in a number of overseas countries and was found in south-east Queensland on 1 December 2016 where it caused a high rate of mortality in farmed prawns.

#### **What is being done to control White spot disease?**

Following the detection of the disease in south-east Queensland, both NSW & Queensland governments implemented restrictions on the movement of uncooked decapod crustaceans and polychaete worms from the Queensland affected area (described as the area from Caloundra south to the NSW/Queensland border).

This includes a prohibition on the importation of all uncooked decapod crustaceans and polychaete worms, whether intended for use as bait or for human consumption. A number of exceptions are included in the current importation restrictions that allow movement of high value/negligible risk seafood products direct for human consumption only.

- White spot disease of crustaceans is declared a Prohibited Matter under Schedule 2 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and
- The NSW Biosecurity (White spot disease of crustaceans) Control Order (No. 3) 2017 was gazetted on Friday 17 November 2017.

The Commonwealth has also introduced a range of measure to prevent to introduction of White spot disease to Australia. See [www.outbreak.gov.au](http://www.outbreak.gov.au)

#### **What if I eat prawns or other crustaceans with White spot disease?**

White spot disease is not a threat to human health or food safety.

#### **Why is a recreational fishing closure occurring adjacent to three NSW prawn farms located on the Clarence River?**

The closure is one strategy to reduce the risk of White spot disease infecting prawn farms. The closure is being implemented ahead of the expected increase in recreational fishing over the summer festive season.

Australian prawn farmers are developing additional strategies to deal with the threat of White spot disease, taking advice from international experts and the Australian Prawn Farmers Association. They require additional time to develop and implement these strategies.

This response is consistent with a review completed in December 2017 by the Commonwealth's Inspector-General Biosecurity highlighting the risk of recreational fishing activity close to prawn farm water intakes.

The closure will assist in reducing the unintentional risk of White spot disease impacting on nearby prawn farms from recreational fishers using bait that may be carrying the virus. The distance of 100 metres away from the adjacent prawn farms is considered adequate to reduce the potential risk of the virus entering the farms.

### **How can recreational fishing affect prawn farms?**

Recreational fishers using crustaceans and polychaete worms infected with White spot disease as bait or berley can unintentionally spread the virus.

### **What if I just use different bait?**

It is necessary to close the area for six months to all recreational fishing to reduce the risk of introduction of White spot disease into nearby prawn farms.

### **How long will the closure be in place?**

The area closure will be in place until 22 June 2018.

The closure period is intended to provide adequate time for prawn farm businesses to develop and implement their own White spot disease risk management measures.

The closure is supported by the Commonwealth and State Governments and the NSW Aquaculture Industry. A White spot disease outbreak within NSW prawn farms would result in a loss of \$6 million dollars to the state of NSW and also impact on our wild fisheries and the environment.

### **How do I know where I can and can't fish?**

Signs with maps of the closure area will be erected along the shoreline showing the area adjacent to three prawn farms on the Clarence River, Romiaka Channel and Palmers Channel that is closed to recreational fishing.

Further information on White spot disease can be found at <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/pests-diseases/animal-health/aquaculture/white-spot-disease>

### **What happens if I fish in the closure areas?**

The closure is being implemented under Section 8 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*.

Fishers caught fishing in recreational fishing closure areas risk being fined under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*.