FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE WET STORAGE OF SHELLFISH AT RETAIL

Wet storage refers to the re-immersion of shellfish to store, remove sand or improve condition.

The wet storage of shellfish poses unique and significant food safety risks. Due to their mode of feeding by indiscriminate filtration, bivalve shellfish are by nature a high-risk food. They feed by drawing water across the gill surface, which then traps particles from the water and transports them to the mouth for ingestion. As they feed, bacteria, viruses and harmful substances that are in the water will be accumulated in the shellfish. Water used for wet storage must be sourced from a clean area and maintained in a manner that prevents the build-up of pathogens and other contaminants. Proper construction, operation and maintenance of wet storage systems is crucial to the safe wet storage of shellfish.

Shellfish Holding System Design

- All equipment in contact with water must be durable, non-toxic, non-corrosive and easily cleanable.
- The system must include a UV disinfection unit (or equivalent alternative water disinfection system approved for use by NSW Food Authority) capable of maintaining a zero faecal coliform count at the entry point to the tank (e.g. at the spray bar). The disinfection unit must be capable of achieving a 99.9% (3 log) kill rate for *E.coli* at the flow rate generated by the water circulation pumps.
- Shellfish holding systems must have completely separate water circulation systems from other species (such as finfish or crustaceans). Do NOT place shellfish in the same tank as finfish or crustaceans.
- Shellfish holding systems should exhibit good water flow with no dead spots.
- A cooling system should be included in the design; water temperature for shellfish wet storage systems should be maintained below 15°C (<10°C is recommended for most species).
- Tank or spray systems are both acceptable.

Shellfish Holding System Operation and Maintenance

- The entire system should be cleaned and sanitised prior to each use.
- Source water must be free of any contaminants. Ocean water must be sourced from a clean area away from outfalls or shorefront development such as marinas. Each draw of water for wet storage purposes must be batch tested with a result of 14 faecal coliforms/100ml or less. Ocean water suppliers should provide a laboratory test report for each batch and a declaration that the water has been sourced from a clean area.
- Shellfish should be culled to remove dead or damaged animals and free of mud/debris prior to being placed into wet storage.
- Shellfish should be inspected, and dead shellfish removed at least daily.
- The disinfection system must be on while shellfish are being wet stored.
- Shellfish from different lots/batches should be kept separate to maintain product traceability.
- Temperature records should be maintained (AM & PM each day is recommended).

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).