

Note for Information

CRAYFISH PLAGUE - ADVICE ON DISINFECTION

Introduction

Crayfish plague is a serious threat to native crayfish populations. Although the movement of live animals carries the greatest risk, there is also a risk that fishing equipment, crayfish traps or other equipment could cause the spread of diseases between waters.

The greatest threat to our native white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) comes from a fungal disease called Crayfish Plague. The fungus that causes the disease, *Aphanomyces astaci*, is present in many signal crayfish. Traps that have been used to catch signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), or any equipment that has been used in infected waters, could spread the disease to native crayfish when used in a different river catchment.

To minimise this threat to native crayfish and fish populations (through other diseases) anyone using equipment in the water should ensure that it is clean and disinfected before using it in a different water.

Disinfection methods

In all of the following methods **all** mud and plant matter should be removed before disinfection.

Sun Drying

The cheapest, safest and most effective way of disinfecting any equipment is to thoroughly dry it in sunlight. It is important that all surfaces of the equipment are aired and that there is no standing water. Spores have a limited lifespan outside of a crayfish host. This time is not known accurately but is thought to be maximum about six weeks. So if equipment is left for a long time it should be safe, even if it hasn't dried in this time.

Iodophors

This is sold at agricultural suppliers as udder wash. Equipment should be immersed or sprayed with a solution and be left to stand for a minimum of 15 minutes. The manufacturer's recommendations on dilution should be followed. Disposal information should also be adhered to and the waste chemical should not be allowed to enter surface water drains. Iodophors go off rapidly in sunlight and should be stored out of the light. Once the dark brown colour has been lost the chemical will no longer be effective. Equipment should be rinsed with large amounts of water before being used again.

Advice on local sources of supply for the above preparations may be obtained from:

Wescodyne/losan CCT
Ciba Geigy Ltd
Tel. 01223 833621

FAM 30/Iofarm
Vanodine International
Tel. 01772 322200

Virkon S

Produced by DuPont, this broad range disinfectant for viruses that can also kill fungal spores like the crayfish plague. It should be used as per the manufacturer's instructions at a dilution of 1% for a 10 minutes. The product is biodegradable, but equipment should still be thoroughly rinsed before use. Virkon S is available from agricultural supplies and in an aquatic form from aquarium retail outlets.

Other disinfectants

The above named products are thought to be the most effective, however, it is likely that other general disinfectants will be effective e.g. bleach, anti-fungicide such as mould cleaner. If it difficult to get hold of iodophores or Virkon S, use other disinfectants along with thorough cleaning and rinsing. Boiling for three minutes is also effective, if appropriate.

General advice

Disinfection need only be applied when equipment is to be used in a different water body from previously. If the equipment is always used in the same water then no disease transfer risk exists.

If a chemical disinfectant is used, it is the responsibility of the person using it to make sure that all the manufacturer's instructions and health and safety advice is fully adhered to.

Waste chemicals should always be disposed of responsibly. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. For advice on disposal please contact your local Environment Agency office on 08708 506 506.

Contact

If you would like more advice please contact the National Customer Contact Centre on:

Tel: 08708 506506

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk