

CODE OF PRACTICE

1. Make sure that crayfish are held in secure containers at all times. You must not, under any circumstances, let them go or allow them to escape.
2. Return any crayfish unused for human consumption to the supplier or make sure they are dead before you dispose of them. Do not give away or sell live crayfish for farming, restocking, for ponds or as pets.
3. Transfer animals quickly using similar packing when breaking down consignments of crayfish into smaller lots. Never leave the lids off containers or the crayfish will undoubtedly try to escape.
4. Always transfer or re-package crayfish inside a building - and never near any natural waters.
5. Treat crayfish with care. They are subject to the normal provisions of animal welfare. Do not treat them or their containers roughly, or subject them to rapid changes of temperature or environment. Never place containers near radiators. Keep crayfish cool, between 4°C and 10°C, and in suitable secure containers with tightly fitting lids. Keep containers in the dark and quiet to avoid unnecessary stress to the crayfish.
6. Fasten the lids of transport containers with waterproof tape to prevent escape in transit. When transporting crayfish make sure you follow the Welfare of Animals during Transport rules.
7. Crayfish are normally transported in boxes, packed fairly tightly with suitable natural vegetation to act as padding and to keep them moist. They should not be transported in water as this presents major problems of spillage. Head space above the packing may be filled with air-filled plastic bags. Ice may be included in the packing to maintain temperature, but never in direct contact with the crayfish.
8. On arrival at a restaurant, keep crayfish in their transport box until needed in the kitchen. If you intend to keep them for more than 36 hours, transfer them to a larger secure container with some water in the bottom (2cm to 3cm deep). Alternatively, keep them in a secure container with drain holes and either cover them with wet newspaper or spray them with water twice a day. If in good condition, the packing vegetation may also be transferred - otherwise obtain similar, fresh material.
9. **Ensure that all staff who handle crayfish are aware that releasing them without a licence is a criminal offence. It is a real threat to our vulnerable native species and to the wider aquatic environment.**

CRAYFISH ALERT

FISH MARKETS • RESTAURANTS • HOTELS



Keep the lid on crayfish

Crayfish can cause severe environmental damage if they escape into the wild

Make sure crayfish:

- can never escape
- are never released
- are always kept in secure containers
- are always repackaged indoors



THE UNLICENSED RELEASE OF CRAYFISH IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

Keep the lid on crayfish...

...help protect the environment and don't break the law

This leaflet gives restaurants, hotels and fish markets guidance on how to avoid conflict with the law. It also explains how you have an important role to play in protecting the environment.

Foreign crayfish can cause severe environmental damage and spread disease to our vulnerable native species.

All traded crayfish will be foreign species.

Follow the Code of Practice on the back of this leaflet.



Releasing crayfish without a licence, or allowing them to escape, is a criminal offence.

Crayfish move quickly and are masters of escape. Always keep them in secure containers. Re-package them indoors - and never close to rivers or ponds.

Never give away surplus stock. Make sure they are dead before you dispose of them, or return them to your supplier.

If you hold crayfish for any purpose except for human consumption you will need to follow new rules on keeping them. Contact the information point overleaf for details.

Endangered species

The escape of foreign crayfish imported for food and for farming has endangered the species of crayfish native to Great Britain. Fisheries Departments have introduced new rules to help control and prevent the further spread of foreign crayfish. The release into the wild of such crayfish is already illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (except under licence). But further measures have become necessary to protect our native crayfish.

Disease and competition

Until the early 1980s, our native crayfish were widespread throughout the chalk and limestone rivers of England and Wales. Following the introduction of foreign crayfish for farming, a number escaped into our rivers. Other foreign crayfish are thought to have escaped from fish markets. All freshwater crayfish are expert escape artists and very difficult to contain. Colonies of non-native crayfish are now established in many of our rivers and other waters. The bigger, faster growing foreign crayfish can out-compete our smaller native species. Some can also carry the highly infectious disease crayfish plague. This disease has no effect on humans but can spell disaster for our native crayfish - entire populations have been wiped out within days. Foreign crayfish can also damage plant life, fish populations and river banks. Once established in the wild they are virtually impossible to eradicate.

New measures

Further rules on crayfish have been introduced under the Prohibition of Keeping of Live Fish (Crayfish) Order 1996. These rules enable better controls on the keeping of foreign species, especially in those areas of Great Britain where populations of native crayfish still survive. Anyone who farms or holds crayfish must follow the new rules.

Exemption for crayfish held for human consumption

Restaurants, hotels and fish markets are exempt from the new rules provided that they hold crayfish for human consumption only. Live crayfish for human consumption will continue to be available to any restaurant in any part of Great Britain that wishes to purchase them. However, this does not mean that you are exempt from the rules governing the release of foreign crayfish. In particular, crayfish held for food must be kept in secure containers. They must not, either deliberately or through carelessness, be allowed to escape. Such action may constitute an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. It could also have serious environmental consequences.

For further information please contact:-



**Environment
Agency**