Department of Fisheries

Bulletin No. 40

April 2009

Commercial Fisheries Production Bulletin

Fish for the future

WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY

2008/09 SEASON

THE COASTAL FISHERY TO DATE

Preliminary processors production figures indicate that the total 'whites' catch (end of January) for the 2008/2009 season was 3,753 tonnes, 16.0% higher than last season's 'whites' catch (processors figures) of 3,236 tonnes and 13.8% lower than the average for the last ten 'whites' catches (1998/99 – 2007/08).

Table 1. Preliminary rock lobster production figures

Production (t) to end of January 2008

Fremantle	Jurien	Geraldton	Total
1,181	616	1,439	3,236

Production (t) to end of January 2009

Fremantle	Jurien	Geraldton	Total
1,413	791	1,549	3,753

Difference (t) and percentage difference

Fremantle	Jurien	Geraldton	Total
232	175	110	517
19.6%+	28.4%+	7.6%+	16.0%+

10 year average catch (t) to end of January 2008	4,349
Production (t) to end of January 2009	3,752
Difference (t)	597 -
% Difference	13.7% -

Zone C produced a total 'whites' catch (processors figures) of 2,204 tonnes, 22.6% up on last season's 'whites' catch (processors figures) of 1,797 tonnes, whilst Zone B produced a total 'whites' catch (processors figures) of 1,549 tonnes, 7.6% up on last seasons 'whites' catch of 1439 tonnes (processors figures).

The 'whites' run started in earnest towards the end of November, although the timing of the start did vary throughout the fishery. The high 'whites' catch (16% up on the previous season) was understandably well received by commercial fishers. This high catch was most likely the result of high catchability, due to environmental conditions, carry over stock from the previous season, together with the large size of the lobsters caught, also the result of environmental conditions. The large size of 'white' lobsters was predicted and discussed on the last RLIAC tour meeting in October.

Individual fishers catches were generally high, however, it must be remembered that as a direct result of effort reductions (number of pots actually being fished reduced to approximately 40,000 and the number of boats actually fishing reduced to 395) there were more rock lobsters on the grounds available to each fisher. In other words, the 'same size cake' distributed amongst less fishers. Many fishers commented on how good it was out there, with less pots and room to move.

Anecdotal evidence from fishers suggests that catches in the shallows 'hung on' and that excellent deep water catches, in some areas, extended well into January.

By the start of the summer closure on 15 January in Zone B deep water catches had well and truly finished. Of interest, the catches in zone B, following the opening of the summer closure were not as good as the two previous seasons. As in previous seasons, Zone C fishers reported large numbers of breeding animals in certain areas of the fishery, and in both Zones B and C, large numbers of undersize, particularly in deep water. Octopus predation in pots still continues to be a problem throughout the fishery.

THE CAPES AREA

One or two boats ventured into the Capes area for exceptionally low catches in both deep and shallow waters.

Due to very low rock lobster catches early in the season, the two licensed Windy Harbour/Augusta vessels converted to and fished for deep water crabs in the area.

BIG BANK AREA

As a result of breeding stock concerns in the Big Bank area. This was not opened for fishing during the 2008/09 season.

PUERULUS SETTLEMENT

The 2008/09 puerulus season (main settlement months August to December) produced well below average settlement at all collection sites (Figure 1). It is the lowest in the 40 year time series of puerulus collections at all sites and is expected to result in a low catch of about 5600 t. in 2011/12.

This decline in settlement is currently being fully investigated by research staff of CSIRO and the Department of Fisheries. Environmental factors such as the strength of the Leeuwin Current, winter/spring westerly wind patterns and water temperatures play an important role in determining the survival and settlement of larval lobsters. However other environmental variables may also be affecting settlement. Another important factor is the health of the rock lobster breeding stock.

Historically, years of strong Leeuwin Current (associated with La Nina events) have been associated with high levels of puerulus settlement and strong catches three to four years later. El Nino events and years of weak Leeuwin Current flow have the opposite effect. Prior to this season, good puerulus settlement always coinciding with La Nina conditions, together with westerly winds during winter and spring have traditionally produced good settlement.

Fisheries research has commenced a joint FRDC project with CSIRO oceanographers attempting to identify any environmental anomalies that may have been responsible for the poor settlement results experienced this year and to obtain a better understanding of the role that the Leeuwin Current plays in the dispersal of larvae/puerulus along the Western Australian coast.

The resultant recruitment from this year's settlement (2008/09) will be seen first in the catches of the "reds" of the 2011/2012 season and then as "whites" catches in 2012/2013.

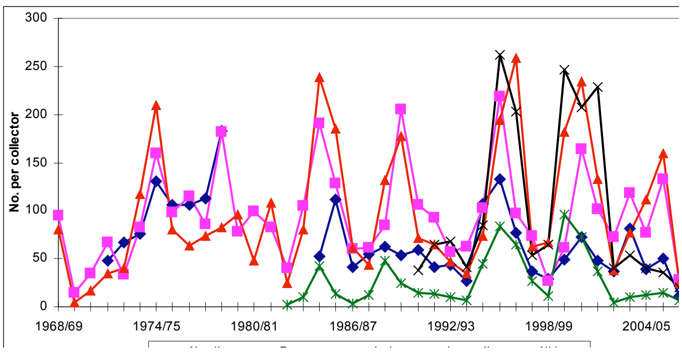


Figure 1.Trends in puerulus settlement at selected coastal sites Alkimos, Jurien, Seven Mile Beach and the Abrolhos Islands.

The latest puerulus settlement information for 2008/09 is posted onto the Department of Fisheries web site (see address below), to enable all WRL stakeholders to access the latest information in a timely manner. This information will be updated within ten days of the team returning from the field. The puerulus collections are carried out five days either side of the full moon.

http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/docs/pub/PuerulusSettlement/index.php?0707

Predictions of catch are available for the next 4 seasons (2008/09-2011/12). These are based on puerulus settlements three and four years prior to the season for which the catch is predicted. Table 2 shows the forecast by zone. Decreases are expected in all zones.

Year	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C	Total
08/09	1,950	2,950	4,300	9,200
09/10	1,950	2,750	4,150	8,850
10/11	1,800	2,350	3,000	7,150
11/12	1,650	2,050	1,900	5,600

Table 2. Predictions of catch for the next 4 rock lobster seasons by Zone. These predictions have not been adjusted for the management changes implemented in 2008/09.

SOI Updated

La Niña continued during January 2009, as evidenced by below-average equatorial sea surface temperatures (SST) across the central and east-central Pacific Ocean.

A majority of the model forecasts for the Niño-3.4 region indicate a gradual weakening of La Niña through February-April 2009, with an eventual transition to ENSO-neutral conditions. Therefore, based on current observations, recent trends, and model forecasts, La Niña is expected to continue into the Northern Hemisphere Spring 2009 (NOAA-Climate Prediction Centre 2009).

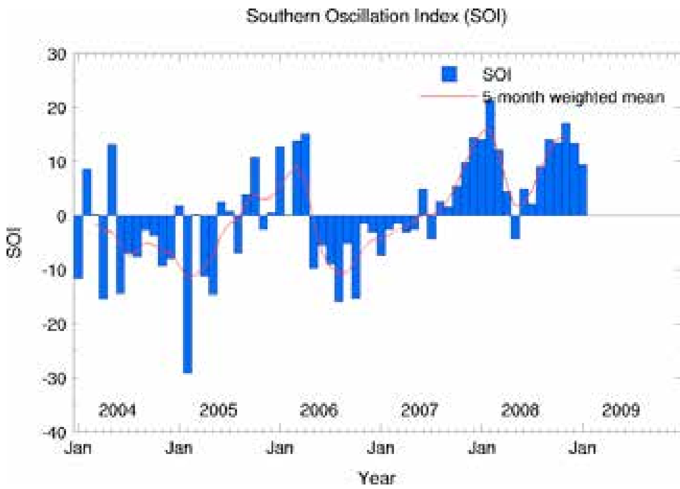


Figure2: Southern Oscillation Index and the 5 month weighted average since 2003 until February 2009 (data supplied by the Australian Government- Bureau of Meteorology).

MARKETS AT A GLANCE*

Western Rock Lobster

The 2008/2009 season opened with expectations of low catches and fisher difficulties following a late announcement by WA Department of Fisheries to include additional management measures designed to preserve landings in light of all time poor coastal puerulus recruitment.

Prior to the season start, markets were all generally long on frozen stocks and had signalled to processors the need for significant price reviews in order to move unsold 07/08 inventories.

Catches eventually progressed above expectations with beach landings to end January up 16% to the same time in 2007/2008. Of particular note was the large increase in live lobster production as compared to recent seasons, mostly in response to the lacklustre frozen demands and future outlook as well an urgency for necessary cash flow.

November – January (YTD commercial production for live/whole catch weight)

Year	Raw Tails	Whole Cooked	Whole Raw	Live
04/05	627 mt 26.5%	1,145 mt 48.4%	69 mt 2.9%	524mt 22.1%
05/06	643 mt 25.5%	1,034 mt 41.0%	201 mt 8.0%	642 mt 25.5%
06/07	734 mt 24.9%	1,078 mt 36.6%	221 mt 7.5%	913 mt 31.0%
07/08	798 mt 27.4%	1,207 mt 41.4%	113 mt 3.9%	796 mt 27.3%
08/09	898 mt 26.1%	1,131 mt 32.9%	58 mt 1.7%	1,357 mt 39.4%

HK/China

Live

The period of November 2008 through to January 2009 saw huge variances in prices paid for live WA lobster, both in terms of historical highs and historical lows.

By early November many importers were focusing on the cold water New Zealand and South Australian Jasus species. Prices were at all time records with South Australia prices reaching AUD$120 per kg and NZ breaching the US$80 mark. By the time the WA season opened (15 Nov) general demand had stalled and live prices soon plummeted particularly for 400 – 600g sizes. At that time New Zealand live prices dropped back to the US$40/kg for these sizes and in response Western Rock Lobster entered the market at US$35/kg (note this was still one US Dollar higher than 2007/08 season start).

With a poor start to the catching season WA live prices lifted up to near US$40+/kg CF (cost and freight) by around the 20th of November and just prior to the C zone entry. NZ moved back up to around US$90 and these high levels remained through the first week in December until the start of the 'whites' run (around the 9th December). Prices then again plummeted downwards and by the 12th December small sizes were fetching only US$26-$28. By the 20th December, with packers desperate to convert stock to cash, live prices were as low as US$21 – 22/kg CF. As the Western New Year arrived live prices lifted slightly up to near US$25 and remained there through the first two weeks in January.

Mid January approached and the combination of higher demand for Chinese New Year (CNY) and large tank holding mortalities by industry caused a spike in the market, and as quickly as the prices had previously fallen, then rose up by the 13th January, jumping from near US$28 up to US$38 per kg. By the 15th live WA prices were up to US$45 and by the 16th they had pushed through the $50 mark, peaking at near US$55/kg CF. Those packers with good holdings and good catches took advantage of this as volumes were unloaded and previous season live losses were soon absorbed.

By the start of the week before CNY "historically a lower import demand period", live prices fell back to around US$40 per kg and lasted through until the start of CNY celebration (26th January) at which time the market shortages were soon realized and prices again jumped up to US$45-US$50. By 6th Feb, WA was back at US$55 on top of low catches and low tank holdings.

As usual, the CNY window was about to close (South Australian beach prices plummeted overnight to AUD$20) and by the 18th of February WA live market prices were down to mid to low US$30's. The following week, high US$20's and by the end of February back to the low to mid US$20's.

It was interesting to note this year's Mexican live prices being offered and sold at times for higher levels than for Western rock lobster, with Mexican sales levels not noted below USD$28 per kg all season.

Frozen

With significant quantities of low priced live WA lobsters shipped in December and early January, and many restaurant freezers full of WA origin tank mortalities (frozen as whole raw), there was little interest in 1st grade frozen imports. Unsold frozen inventories of a range of origins at significantly higher prices (previous season stocks) left over from the Beijing Olympics also discouraged further activities by major importers.

Some reports of sales for frozen whole raw NZ lobsters were noted by air as live replacement pre CNY, due to minimal on hand frozen raw from Southern Rock Lobster mortalities.

Cheap Indian and SE Asian frozen products continued to take up the majority of frozen cooked interest, although some limited interest in whole cooked WA products was noted pre Christmas.

Japan

Live

Period	LIVE	Live Imports (by month)	
		Cost and Freight (Yen per kg)	Yen per kg
Nov-05	Australia	3,851	36,926
Nov-06	Australia	4,540	45,525
Nov-07	Australia	4,801	42,928
Nov-08	Australia	3,790	26,855
Dec-05	Australia	3,614	182,694
Dec-06	Australia	4,118	141,711
Dec-07	Australia	4,079	105,917
Dec-08	Australia	2,717	137,648
Jan-06	Australia	3,750	80,425
Jan-07	Australia	4,748	59,075
Jan-08	Australia	4,880	53,606
Jan-09	Australia	3,501	40,705
Nov-Jan 05/06	Australia	3,680	300,045
Nov-Jan 06/07	Australia	4,347	246,311
Nov-Jan 07/08	Australia	4,444	202,451
Nov-Jan 08/09	Australia	3,013	205,208

As can be seen from the above Japanese import statistics, the demand for live lobster into Japan has again remained low. The volumes sent this year from WA were nearly identical to that of last year except that the market prices were considerably lower. With the continuing lower demand in Japan, a drop in price managed only to maintain previous consumption totals. As in Taiwan, distributor and importer activity and infrastructure for live lobster has been significantly reduced over past years making sudden increases in throughput difficult.

Frozen

The continuing decline in Japanese lobster consumption was well evident with the news of YTD (Year to Date) 2008 finishing with imports of less than 2500mt frozen lobster, down approximately 80% from 10 years previous.

With increasing average frozen prices and less spending power by Japanese consumers, lobster as a category has been largely replaced and where maintained, the focus on origins with smaller sizes and cheaper piece pricing has dominated.

By end December 2008, purchase activity for standard frozen pink A or B WA lobsters was virtually non existent in Japan.

Reports of carry over inventories of whole raw red A & whole cooked red A sizes were limited although enough for a very subdued demand especially given very high inventory costs from mid 2008 production purchases (eg. estimated US$31/kg x FE (Foreign Exchange) 108 = YEN3348 CF cost at 15 June 2008).

By end January and early February 2009, importers considering new exchange rates and offer levels had started raising interest (eg. estimated US$23/kg x FE 98 = YEN2254 CF cost @ 15 February 2009).

Indicative of low demand in the 2nd half of 2008 was the lowest beach price (YEN2500+) in recent memory for the local Japanese live catches (P japonicus) and the resulting low prices for whole raw / sashimi grade raw produced. This was not good news for importers of whole raw from Indonesia, Africa and Australia which compete against this source.

With lower global prices and dramatically reduced global demand, new price offerings for all origins continued to fall. With continued fear for further price adjustments, Japanese importers either removed themselves from the market or engaged producers with significant price counters.

A specific example were major Namibian producers of the small cold water African species (Jasus lalandii) who had in 2008 negotiated near YEN2900 were unable to contract new 2009 production with counter rumours of YEN1300-1400 (US$13-14/kg CF).

Cuban negotiations for end season production and January imports were undisclosed but domestic market sales levels were slashed in effort to re-start movement.

As at end Jan 2009, the Japanese market with limited unsold WA red type inventories and in anticipation of revised prices now YEN1000/kg lower for WA lobster red colours looked somewhat more positive than for other origins. It has been commented that major buying activities are unlikely to be realized before end of Japanese financial year (30th March) and will probably see a greater focus in 2009 on whole cooked products.

Pricing comparison 2009 vs 2008 (*indicative only)

15 Feb 2008 YEN/USD @ 104 est Sell red A @ US$31.00 est YEN 3224

15 Feb 2009 YEN/USD @ 98 est Sell red A @ US$23.00 est YEN 2254

Indicative Prices

Whole cooked red A @ US$22.00-24.00/kg CF Main Port Japan* fair demand

Whole cooked pink A @ US$20.00-22.00/kg CF Main Port Japan* low to minimal demand

(* as at Feb 15, 2009)

Japanese Frozen Imports (full year ending 31 Dec)

	Australia	Cuba	SAfrica/Nb	India	Indonesia	TOTAL (all Origins)
2005	1,221mt	1,122mt	792mt	286mt	81mt	4,509mt
2006	926mt	547mt	560mt	623mt	191mt	3,741mt
2007	643mt	327mt	778mt	374mt	395mt	3,573mt
2008	687mt	228mt	492mt	151mt	119mt	2,495mt

NOTE: Frozen imports have radically declined to Japan over the past 10 years from 13,000mt to 2,500mt or approx 80%

Taiwan

Live

At the opening of the WA season in mid November, Taiwan buyers were clearly still focused on live Mexican lobster supplies. With the WA season starting slow and prices near USD$38 – $40/kg CF, Taiwan importers soon switched back to the Mexican supply which had been held steady around the US$28 -$30 per kg.

As catches in WA improved, Taiwan importers took full advantage of the lower Western Rock Lobster prices, which at times were even lower than Mexican live levels, and resulting in import volumes well ahead of recent years.

With continued low pricing, total live exports from WA were well up by the end of the ‘whites’. The unstable Australian dollar and poor frozen markets saw processors focusing on live sales at every opportunity, often at a loss but as a means of supporting cash flow requirements.

Higher live prices over the past number of years forced on from increased competition with Chinese buyers and higher priced frozen products have pushed many restaurants and traditional live users to give up handling live WA products. Switching to cheaper, stable quality frozen products, (especially frozen whole cooked) has meant dismantling live lobster systems and moving the expectation of customers.

Essentially there would seem now not enough Taiwanese distribution systems in place by importers or distributors, nor would it seem that there are enough customers with tank capacities to meet the increased needs of processors to suddenly improve daily live sales.

Frozen

Taiwanese demand for frozen WA lobster in 2008 continued to shrink and was further impacted by liquidity shortages and greater risk management of traditional importers and wholesalers buying on a delayed, just in time basis.

WA lobster as the more consistent quality frozen product tended to hold it's position in the overall market better than other origins, although far greater emphasis was being directed to smaller sizes with reduced piece pricing (A24+). At the start of the 'whites', it was noted that a significant volume of prior season frozen WA stocks had been negotiated at new season adjusted prices (down by 30% on average June 08 pricing) and pre-empted rumours of further reductions to come in light of possible building inventories. Importers with carry over mid 2008 inventories were initially able to average inventory prices down until other 'non stocked' buyers soon adjusted selling levels directly to the new pricing which was followed by limited sales of new season 'whites' production. In terms of consumption, this saw the lead up to CNY for WA lobster as positive overall.

Taiwanese imported stocks of Cuban, Florida, Indian and other origins were severely impacted by the lowering of WA prices and were simply forced to adjust sales levels and take up stock losses, whilst those who initially resisted saw drastic reductions in movement and eventual pricing submission.

December 2008 in Taiwan saw the departure of a number of previous importers for bankruptcy as well as a wide range of restaurants unable to continue. It also saw some rare renegotiation and order cancellations from major importers who were caught short on cash flows and over-projections based on traditional sales activities.

With low WA live lobster pricing, stocks increased of frozen raw products resulting from arrival mortalities and further impacted on demand and new enquiries for export grade frozen whole raw.

Not only was the risk adverse climate and the limitation of cash major concerns for importers, but the rapidly worsening exchange rate NTD (Taiwan dollar) against the USD meant more reservation on purchasing activity. JUNE 15 2008 – 30.4, DEC 15 2008 – 33.3, FEB 15 2009 – 34.1

A major pre CNY fiscal initiative of note by the Taiwanese government that contributed to a positive January 2009 sales period was the issuing of a NTD3600 (approx US$100) Consumption Voucher to all Taiwan citizens for use on food or alcohol only.

With lower prices, importers of WA lobster anticipate that many restaurants are likely to continue to range the frozen product on menu's as a favored item over other origins, however, with fewer and fewer diners, the outlook for 2009 consumption of WA lobster is at best uncertain. 'A' sizes look to remain on buyer's lists with good demand for supply available, compared to 'B and C' sizes where buyers of previous season's inventory are still moving through.

Indicative Prices

Frozen whole cooked A @ US$20.00-22.00/kg CF Main Port Taiwan* rated as fair demand

Frozen whole cooked B @ US$18.50-20.00/kg CF Main Port Taiwan* rated as low demand

(* as at Feb 15, 2009)

USA

Frozen

The tail market in USA for Western Rock Lobsters continued to slide as brokers tried their best to move inventories in difficult conditions. Stocks included carry over volumes from 07/08 season (mainly A, B, D & E sizes) and impeded interest in new season production. Mixed airfreights of larger sizes continued until the arrival of first sea-containers in mid to late January.

NZ, South Australian and South African cold water tails followed the downward movement, however, with greater vigour for smaller sizes.

By end January, warm water tails mostly of Caribbean origin had finished their price slide and on top of a surge in retail demand and stock clearances had started to see upward price movements. Major US brokers recorded huge sales during December and January with ex-store prices around US$9-10/lb cheaper than at the corresponding time 1 year earlier.

Tropical north Australian tails were reasonably light in inventory (apart from extra large sizes) and although continued to see prices falls, were held up by the pricing differences in medium to large WA sizes and as such saw a more modest depreciation.

Traditional volume user US Casino markets and high end white tablecloth restaurants were well down on overall consumption, but by early Feb 2009 were quickly replaced by new menu additions from mid to low level family restaurants and café chains which was starting to see increased usage. The volume consumption outlook was noted as steady, providing pricing remained range bound enabling mid level buyers to compete with warm water options. Brokers and distributors saw this as very positive for the cheaper warm water tail products but were uncertain about the longer term outlook for price premiums for colder water types when the new Caribbean productions open again at mid year.

As we have seen occurring in Japan over recent years with the collapse in banking and finance sectors, many US importers and distributors have seen their credit lines shrink significantly and as such have moved to reduce weekly carry levels of high valued goods such as lobster tails.

In summary, American still love to eat lobster and despite the economic recession and widespread reports of restaurant failures and in stark contrast to the traditional casino sectors, retailers in December and January saw stepped up sales of both spiny and clawed lobster products in dramatic response to price reductions. In some sectors the 4th quarter change in lobster sales was up by as much as 60-75% following a period of almost negligible movement. Although most of this retail activity was focussed heavily on Maine and Caribbean species, the resulting price firming for these types assisted throughout the category. At the time of issuing this report, increased activity for WA tails was well noted by all importer brokers and for many buyers it signally the re-start of their purchasing activity for many months.

Indicative Prices

Raw West Aust A 5/6oz tails @ US$ 17.00-18.00/lb ex store USA*

Raw West Aust B 6/8oz tails @ US$ 16.75-17.50/lb ex store USA*

Raw warm water Caribbean 4-8oz tails @ US$ 13.50-14.00/lb ex store USA*

Raw warm water Caribbean 8oz+ tails @ US$ 14.50-15.50/lb ex store USA*

Raw cold water American (Maine) 7oz+ Tails @ US$ 16.00-17.00/lb ex store USA*

(* as at Feb 15, 2009)

NOTES : Major Live Lobster Competitors

* New Zealand's new quota season recommences 1st April in all zones
* Torres Strait & north Queensland for tropical rock lobster re-starts as at 1st Feb

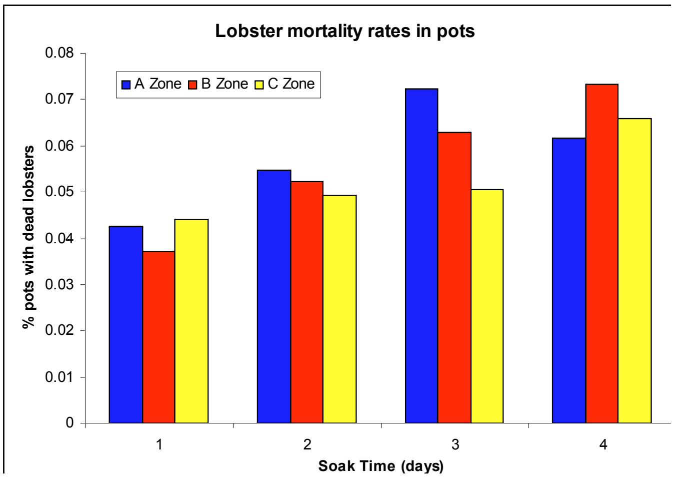
NOTES : Major Frozen Lobster Competitors

* **Cuba** – Continued low production followed on from a season which included several devastating direct hits from hurricanes. Fishing finished a little earlier this season (Jan) and is not due to recommence until late June. Heavy frozen stocks remain in European markets.
* **Florida** – Low production continued as weaker beach prices limited fishing activities. Frozen stocks also remain unsold in all major markets.
* **Caribbean tail producers** – Low production, new minimum size rules for USA entry for Panulirus argus species in place for 2009. Very little inventory remains unsold.
* **Indonesia** – Low production, majority directed to live markets in HK/China for limited frozen production compared to previous years. Prices remain relatively high.
* **India** – Very low production in 2008 to approx 500mt, with approx 100mt unsold as at end Jan 2009. Significant price reductions noted.
* **South Africa / Namibia** – Reduced quota advised for SA by another 5%. Increased live production into Asia and Europe for West Coast production. Namibia unable as yet to finalize Japanese contracts for 2009 production.

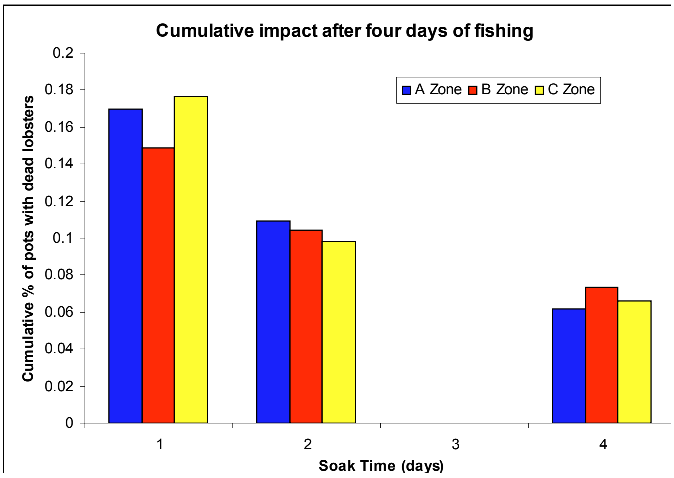
SOAK TIME VERSUS THE INCIDENCE OF DEAD LOBSTERS

Concerns have been raised about increased rates of lobster mortality in pots left baited-up over the three-day closures (Saturday to Monday). The issue has previously been raised with the introduction of three-day moon closures in 2005/06 in C Zone. At that time the available data indicated that multiple-day soaks did not result in significant increases in mortality. To further examine this relationship the department added a new column onto the volunteer logbooks (Total number of dead lobsters) in 2006/07. This data has recently been examined (see below) to re-investigate fears by some fishers that the new "three-days off per week" is having a detrimental effect on lobster stocks.

The figure below shows the proportion of pots containing at least one dead lobster after one, two, three and four-day soak times (standardised for month of fishing and water depth) during past seasons. The lowest mortality rate occurs over a one-day soak (about 4% of pots) with this proportion doubling after soaks of three and four days (about 7%). This increase in the numbers of dead lobsters after a four-day soak has been commented on by a number of fishers during the 'reds' fishery this year.



However it should be noted that this is the impact of one fishing trip. The more appropriate way to examine the impact of days-off vs mortality is to examine what the overall impact on the stocks would be after the same time period (four days). Over a four-day period with no closures you could set and pull your pots four times if you were using single-day soaks, twice if you were using two-day soaks and once using a four-day soak. The mortality from four single-day soaks (the impact that would have occurred over the same time-frame as a four day soak) would be four times that of a single-day soak (4% x 4 = ~16%) (see figure below). Therefore, when examining what mortality would occur over the same time period it becomes apparent that a single four-day soak will result in less than half the number of dead lobsters than would occur after four single-day soaks.



2008/09 TAGGING PROGRAM

There have been a number of changes to last year's tagging programme from the previous year. This is due to The Department of Fisheries tagging in some regions only periodically and also due to the commitment of other work being done. During last year's independent breeding stock survey WRL (Western Rock Lobster) were only tagged out of Dongara and Lancelin. The Department of Fisheries has also been running a separate tagging programme around Rottnest Island since the winter of 2007. So far in this programme 367 WRL have been tagged. To date 8 of these tags have been returned, many by recreational fishers. In addition 11 backpack tagged WRL were release during fishing for the 'whites' in shallow waters off Jurien Bay during December. These backpack tags house a new archival tag, which records direction in addition to depth, temperature and time. So far only two of these tags have been returned. The remaining WRL would be expected to have moulted by now. Assuming they haven't been captured their backpacks will hopefully have been washed up onto the beaches to the north of Jurien Bay waiting for someone to claim the $50 reward. Both recovered backpack tagged WRL were only at liberty for 16 and 23 days respectively. Both moved in a westerly direction from depths of about 45m to depths of about 85m during their period at liberty.

Of the 222 WRL tagged with spagetti tags during the independent breeding stock survey off Dongara only 16 have been returned so far. This is 7% returned as compared with a 9% return out of Dongara during the previous season. Without the help and cooperation of commercial fishers the WRL tagging programme will not provide the sort of information that contibutes to the effective management of your fishery. We therefore request your continued cooperation with the programme.

Please use the correct procedure for dealing with tagged WRL by consigning tag-recaptures to their usual processor to be accurately measured by Fisheries Officers. We ask fishers to please put tagged animals in a separate basket so that processing staff can clearly identify them and alert their presence to Fisheries Officers who accurately measure and record the appropriate data. Once measured, legal tagged WRL will be returned to each fisher's catch and any tagged undersize, setose and berried tagged lobsters will be returned to the ocean. Fishers are sent a $2 Scratch 'n' Win for each tagged WRL correctly returned with some information on growth, movement and period at liberty of the tagged individual.

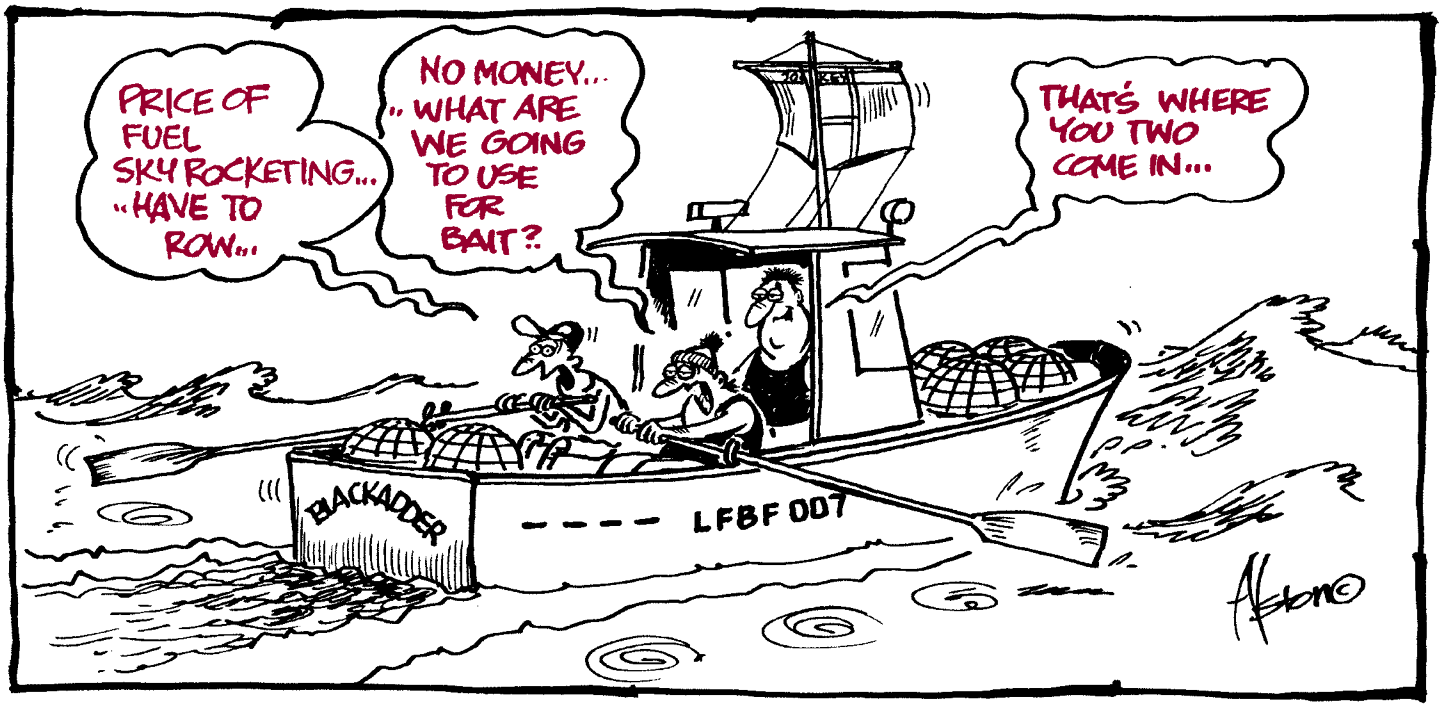
RESEARCH LOG BOOKS

Participation in the research logbook program is currently in excess of 26% of the fleet, which is most rewarding so early in the season as last season's total of 25% has already been exceeded. As always, please accept sincere thanks from the rock lobster team. You can be assured that your efforts are well and truly appreciated.

In view of the exceptionally low puerulus settlement during 2008/09 and the resultant second round of effort reductions, it is understandable that fishers are unhappy. However, this is most certainly not the time to cease filling in a logbook as a means of protest. Right now is the time that industry and research need to work together to solve the problems facing this fishery!

If you are on the mailing list and have not commenced filling in a logbook so far this season, please start as it is most certainly not too late in the season and any data covering the remainder of the season would be of great help to the lobster team.

If you are not on the mailing list and feel that you would like to make a valuable contribution to the research effort, please call Eric Barker on 9203 0111 or simply pick up a book from your local Department of Fisheries office. Please leave your name, address, boat number and name so that you can be placed on the mailing list.



*This information was provided by Mr Greg Hart of Wild Oceans Pty Ltd,
Suite 4, 18 Parry Street Fremantle, WA 6160 ph: (08) 9433 6785 fax: (08) 9335 8478.

Except where acknowledged, the information in this bulletin has been supplied by the FISHERIES RESEARCH DIVISION of the DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES (WA). Contact Mr Eric Barker or Mr Mark Rossbach ph: (08) 9203 0111 fax: (08) 9203 0199.

RES530-03 APR 2009