

Decapod Crustacean Welfare summary

Introduction

Waitrose is pioneering and has the leading role in animal welfare. Waitrose has won more Compassion in World Farming (CiWF) awards than any other supermarket and has been recognised as the best retailer in Europe for farm animal welfare standards, verified by our use of welfare labels on pack. We are the first retailer to fully deliver the [Better Chicken Commitment](#) (meeting higher welfare standards for chickens) across all our own brand products, and we have won numerous awards for our ethical sourcing and high standards across livestock products.

Our 'Responsible Sourcing of fish and seafood' policy details our welfare requirements for all farmed and wild-caught seafood, including decapod crustaceans. This document outlines our comprehensive sourcing approach, alongside specific commitments and the implementation of our welfare and responsible sourcing policies. Our Fisheries and Aquaculture team ensure our suppliers not only meet the Waitrose policy requirements but continually make improvements.

The John Lewis Partnership Ethics and Sustainability Committee, which includes Executive Directors and Directors of both Waitrose and John Lewis, has oversight over the ethics and sustainability strategy, including animal welfare. Waitrose takes any non-compliance of animal welfare policies very seriously. Breaches can lead to the removal of farms or fisheries from the Waitrose supply chain. Compliance with our decapod crustacean welfare policy is a contractual obligation for all suppliers, for all species, and geographies, and products (i.e. those covered by the scope of the policy).

Animal welfare Act

In April 2022, the UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act came into force. It formally recognises that decapod crustaceans are sentient beings, meaning they can experience pain and pleasure. The Act aims to ensure that animal sentience is considered in government policy-making and adequately address the welfare of sentient animals.

Waitrose is committed to the responsible and ethical sourcing of all our seafood and fish and we have specific commitments on decapod welfare as detailed in this policy. We publish our objectives and targets for the management of seafood, including decapod crustacean welfare, on this webpage and in our annual E&S report, for example on eyestalk ablation.

Decapod crustacean welfare is important to us, our customers and our suppliers. To promote their welfare, we:

- Share best practice with all stakeholders globally, including for example our zero tolerance for prawn broodstock eyestalk ablation;

- Set a better industry standard, including contributing to the development of the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) welfare codes of practice;
- Continuously develop our own standards in collaboration with our suppliers;
- Push for continuous improvement in our supply chains;
- Require supplier compliance with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) best practice framework for ghost gear;
- Show leadership by engaging with industry leading experts in innovation projects that will improve welfare by following the latest scientific research findings; and
- Communicate and educate our customers on decapod crustacean welfare.

Scope of policy

Our decapod crustacean policy applies to own label products, to all our decapod crustaceans sourced globally, namely:

- American and European lobster
- Brown crab;
- Coldwater prawns;
- Nephrops (scampi); and
- Warm water prawns.

Prohibited species

We do not permit the sale of the following in our stores:

1. Live decapod crustaceans
2. Wild captured warm water prawns

Certification

We have a responsible sourcing target for 100% of our fish and seafood to be independently verified to a third party standard. The majority of our wild capture fish and shellfish are independently certified to a third party standard, such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). However, if not certified, the fishery should be engaged in a credible Fishery Improvement Project (FIP), working towards becoming certified.

All of our farmed fish and seafood is independently verified to at least one recognised third-party standard (the scope of which includes processing facilities, farms, hatcheries, transport, and feed mills). The following third party certification schemes are recognised for farmed shellfish: Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Global G.A.P., Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) Best Aquaculture Practice 4* (BAP).

Audits and visits

We have regular reviews with our suppliers, once they conduct their own farm and fishery audits. The Waitrose team also aims to visit these fisheries and suppliers to evaluate welfare across each supply chain with the aim of making improvements collaboratively. Where necessary, we will always seek external expertise.

To ensure adherence to welfare guidance, such as the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) welfare codes of practice, our Fisheries and Aquaculture team conduct on-site visits to our suppliers and associated fisheries and farms.

Capture methods

Waitrose is dedicated to mitigating the adverse effects of capture methods on the welfare of decapod crustaceans including the impact of abandoned, lost, and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and other plastics that endanger marine life. ALDFG, often referred to as "ghost fishing gear," has significant negative environmental consequences, including detrimental effects on fish stocks, seabirds, marine mammals, and the broader marine ecosystem, as it continues to catch marine species.

Our commitment to this issue is enacted through our fish sourcing policy. This policy mandates that our suppliers adhere to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) best practice framework and risk assessment. Supply chains are required to adopt a risk-based approach to fishing gear loss, which includes investing in fishing gear marking to facilitate vessel identification, implementing best practice principles when setting gear, and demonstrating a responsible approach to fishing and the wider marine environment.

We publicly specify how all our seafood is caught in our Ocean Disclosure Project with details on the species, and farming and fishing region.

We have shared the SAGB Codes of practice with all of our suppliers (own label and branded) to share best practices on fishing methods (such as using pots with escape gaps and checking pots more frequently), and handling during and immediately after capture.

Bycatch

Waitrose is committed to minimising the impact of fishing methods on all decapod crustaceans and reducing bycatch. To achieve this, we regularly review all our fisheries and assess their bycatch impacts. We ensure that all our suppliers implement measures designed to mitigate the negative effects of capture methods on decapod crustaceans and to reduce unintended bycatch. For MSC certified fisheries, any Principle 2 (P2) conditions on bycatch are noted and discussed with our suppliers at regular meetings to see where leverage can be used to make improvements. To minimise bycatch, our suppliers are required to use pots/traps with escape hatches for crab and lobster, and a Nordmann grid for coldwater prawns.

In 2024, The Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) published 'Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Crabs, Lobsters, Crawfish and Nephrops'. We have shared the relevant codes (e.g. Processing sector (3), Catching sector (1)). The codes share best welfare practices which include using pots/traps with escape gaps, checking pots more frequently, and handling during and immediately after capture.

Mutilation

Eyestalk ablation

Waitrose has a strict policy prohibiting eyestalk ablation in shrimp (prawn) broodstock reproduction. This is implemented through direct communication with our suppliers with the Senior Aquaculture and Fisheries Manager, our Fish Technical Manager and the relevant Commercial Manager. We also have supplier conditions of purchase which all suppliers must sign up to when they agree to conditions of purchase in our purchasing system; this includes our zero tolerance of eyestalk ablation in our farmed warm water prawn broodstock reproduction. These conditions apply to all existing and any potential new suppliers (who

have to first be approved through a rigorous process by the Fisheries and Aquaculture team).

Working together, Stirling University, the Seajoy Group, and the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA), and Labeyrie Fine Foods co-funded a research project which demonstrated that eyestalk ablation in prawns was not only unnecessary but also potentially counter-productive. This pioneering research was awarded the GAA (Global Aquaculture Alliance) innovation award in 2020, and has acted as both an incentive and enabler for the phasing out of this practice in our supplying hatcheries.

We measure progress against this requirement for those with derogations on at least a quarterly basis with our farmed prawn suppliers as a formal KPI with them directly; currently 85% of our warm water prawn supply is ablation free.

Claw nicking

We do not support the practice of claw nicking (where a cut is made in the tendon of the claw) in our brown crab supply chains. However, we understand that it is currently a requirement on vivier vessels to prevent crabs from injuring each other and even causing death whilst being held in tanks and transported. Claw nicking occurs in a small amount of our Scottish supply. Waitrose supports finding alternative methods to this practice so we can phase it out of our supply chain and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with industry.

Table 3. Progress on our target of 100% non-nicked crab.

Supply region	Target %	Progress to date %
South West of England	100	100
Scotland	100	5

Handling, Holding and Transportation

We require all species to be handled minimally to reduce stress. When holding and transporting decapod crustaceans post capture, it is essential to consider species-specific needs that take into account physical, physiological and behavioural needs.

Crab and lobster

Once removed from the fishing pot/trap, our crab and lobster are either stored in stacked crates onboard the vessel, kept in bongos submerged in water or stored in vivier tanks with aerated seawater, with all kept in darkened conditions. Parameters such as water temperature, salinity, exposure to light and crowding are evaluated and monitored.

Upon arrival at the quay/dock, our decapod crustaceans are moved to processing factories by refrigerated lorries. These lorries maintain a stable, high-humidity, chilled environment through controlled air temperature.

Decapod crustaceans should be transported as quickly as possible, to minimise stress. Our UK crab and lobster are transported from vessel to processing factory within 24 hours and we aim for the same timeframe for all other species.

Table 4. Transportation times for brown crab and lobster

Species	Transportation times	
	Time from unloading at quay to processing factory	Maximum time held at factory to processing time
American lobster	2 - 4 hours	< 12 hours
Brown crab	< 1 hour	< 12 hours
European lobster	< 1 hour	< 12 hours

Slaughter

Stunning should make crustaceans insensible to (i.e. unaware of) internal and external stimuli, so that they do not feel pain, suffering or distress through the process of dispatch. This process should be instantaneous.

We require 100% of our crab and lobster to be electrically stunned (Table 5) and will only onboard new suppliers who have this capability. In 2023 we started working with our supplier and a selection of our supplying farms to trial electrical stunning in our warm water prawns, with support from the Shrimp Welfare Project. From these learnings we will continue to improve the process and roll out to our warm water prawn supply chain by the end of 2026.

Table 5. Progress on our target of 100% electrically stunning of decapod crustaceans

Species	Target %	Progress to date %
American lobster	100	100
Brown crab (UK)	100	100
European lobster	100	100
Warm water prawns (<i>Litopenaeus vannamei</i>)	100	13
Warm water prawns (<i>Penaeus monodon</i>)	100	0

Waitrose participates in the Nephrops FIP who are trialling a detailing machine onboard a supply vessel. More information can be found on the FIP webpage (<https://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/uk-fisheries-management-and-supply-chain-initiatives/nephrops-fishery-improvement-project/>).

Education, communication and leadership

Waitrose aspires to be a leader in decapod crustacean welfare. We plan to educate customers about welfare issues and the improvements we are making in our supply chains. This will be communicated via Waitrose's public annual reports, social media channels and presentations at industry events. This year we have supported Crustacean Compassion Day and communicated about it to our customers and have presented at the Global Shrimp Forum.