

In April 2022 the UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act was passed which legally recognised decapod crustaceans as sentient animals capable of feeling pain, distress and discomfort.

Management Commitment & Policy

The Blue Sea Food Company is committed to ensuring the welfare of the crustacea we handle. We endeavour to employ practices designed to reduce stress to the animal and to maximise the survival of crabs and lobsters as they move through the supply chain. Keeping crustacea alive and in good condition is important for economic and food quality reasons and, as the London School of Economics (LSE) 2022 sentience report shows, also for the welfare of these animals. Therefore, this policy applies to all decapod crustaceans from all geographies, products and brands handled by the company.

We recognise that decapod crustacea have species-specific needs that must be met during capture, transport, holding and processing that take account of each species' physical, physiological and behavioural needs. We have worked to ensure that the crustacea we handle are handled, transported, held and dispatched appropriately and in conditions appropriate to their species to ensure their welfare and minimise mortality.

We are engaged with SEAFISH, The Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) and Crustacean Compassion in developing and implementing codes of best practice to help protect the welfare of decapod crustaceans throughout the supply chain. More information can be found on the Seafish website <https://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/animal-sentience-and-welfare/>

The company is committed to reducing the negative effects of capture methods. We will actively promote best practice through our choice of supplier, agreed standards and specifications and by implementation of our welfare procedures.

As an organisation, we are committed to ensuring that we comply with all obligations (legal, ethical and otherwise); including codes of practice and guidance produced by regulatory bodies and specific standards, relating to animal welfare.

Capture

Our crab and lobsters are caught using pots or creels design to enable escape of juvenile animals and allow eventual escape of all over time. Pots are checked regularly and retrieved if lost to avoid 'ghost' fishing.

Pots and creels are a selective and passive form of fishing causing little to no damage to the marine environment. Importantly, crab and lobster are alive when brought to the surface so that any animal which is undersize, damaged, showing eggs or has recently shed its shell will be returned to the sea alive allowing them to grow and breed, contributing to a healthy stock. Any bycatch must also be handled with care and returned to the sea as quickly as possible.

Both the Marine Conservation Society and the Marine Stewardship Council recognise crab caught within our local Inshore Potting Agreement, off the South Devon Coast, as an example of sustainable fishing.

Transport & Storage

The Blue Sea Food Company recognises that environmental conditions during transport and the maximum transport length are species-specific, and must take into account factors that vary by season (environmental conditions, temperature, the crustacean's life cycle etc.). We have two types of transport based on duration of transportation and holding prior to processing. These dictate suitable environmental conditions to ensure maintenance of health and quality and to minimise physiological stress.

Short term transport is best accomplished in air, where the crustaceans are kept in a high humidity, dark, chilled environment to avoid stress. Longer term transport is best accomplished with immersion systems in which the water quality is managed by temperature control, aeration and water exchange to maintain optimum conditions. In general, we ensure that in air and water the environmental temperature is at or below the animals' acclimation levels but above freezing. If in air, maintaining high humidity with protection from wind and sun. If in water, ensuring aeration systems are functional and water quality maintained.

For information on how the ecology and physiology of brown crab and lobster influence their response to capture and live transport, you can view the SAGB Advisory Note on Crustacea Storage and Transport here - [Crustacea-Storage-and-Transport-SAGB-Advisory-Note-2021.pdf](#) (shellfish.org.uk)

Dispatch

The Blue Sea Food Company ensures that all crustaceans well handle are electrically stunned to ensure instantaneous insensibility before cooking and processing. We do not sell live crustaceans direct to the consumer or the public.

Governance & Management

Our Managing Director is ultimately accountable for the decapod crustacean policy and oversight is provided by our Technical, H&S and Environment Manager. The day-to-day management of this policy and its implementation is the responsibility of our operations and transport teams.

A welfare action plan has been developed by our senior management team with specific welfare targets and responsibilities assigned within our welfare procedures. The team will meet several times a year to monitor progress and to hear updates from the different teams responsible for the day-to-day implementation and to identify and implement appropriate actions where necessary. The team will monitor progress of the company's welfare targets and ensure that it publicly reports against these targets.

Electrical stunning targets

The Blue Sea Food Company is committed to reporting the percentage of crustaceans electrically stunned. We commit to electrically stunning 100% of crustaceans prior to cooking or processing. We will report through our website on the percentage of brown crab electrically stunned over a 12-month period. We will monitor this from the beginning of each financial year, with regular updates to the senior team and report publicly on an annual basis.

Decapod Crustacean Welfare Training

The Blue Sea Food Company are committed to ensuring all relevant employees have appropriate awareness and training regards to animal welfare. Training material related to the handling, storage and dispatch of crustaceans has been updated to include the importance of humane treatment of decapod crustacea.

Innovation

The Blue Sea Food Company continuously looks to improve its operations, including crustacean welfare, through internal and external research and development. In collaboration with Simon Buckhaven and the University of Bristol, we were instrumental in the development of the first commercially viable electrical stunner. The company stunning whole crab from its conception in 2004.

We continue to encourage further innovation to address current gaps in decapod crustacean welfare technology. For example, the company has trialled equipment to band claws, however, an effective method that can be employed at sea, in a safe manner, is not currently available.

Reporting

We have set the targets below which we will regularly measure throughout the year and report on publicly annually.

100% of our crustaceans are caught using static gear.

100% of our crustaceans are electrically stunned before cooking and processing.

90% of our transportation and holding times achieved.

This policy has been established and agreed by the company's senior management who fully support its implementation and are responsible for ensuring that it is communicated, understood and implemented at all levels within the organisation.

Signed:



Date: 20th December 2023

David Markham - Managing Director on behalf of The Blue Sea Food Company