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# Redclaw

*from harvest to market*

A manual of handling procedures

Clive M. Jones  
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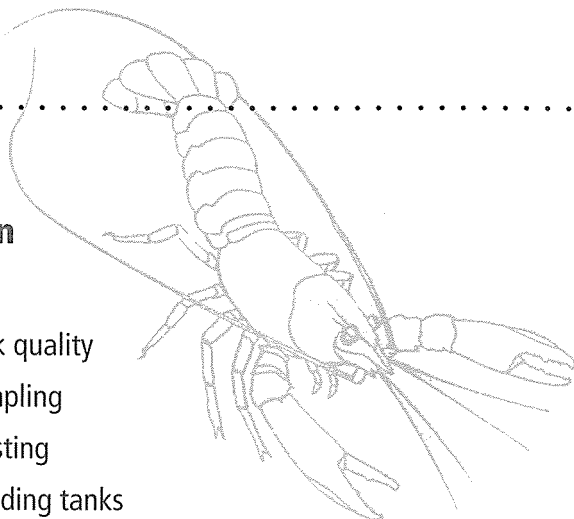
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# 1 Introduction

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Optimising the quality of redclaw for the market is dependent on many factors throughout the production chain. Poor farming or handling practices at any time from juvenile production through to harvesting of market size stock may be reflected in poor quality product or high levels of mortality during live transport. Optimising quality of product during post-harvest processes therefore cannot be isolated from farming methods. Quality assurance procedures should begin at the initial stages of production. However, the converse is also true, and post-harvest procedures should ensure that harvested stock is maintained at high quality until it reaches its market destination and the consumer.

Redclaw are perceived as being an extremely 'forgiving' animal in that they are physically robust, tolerant of poor conditions and easily kept alive. It is true that they possess broad environmental tolerances and can survive exposure to air. However, reliance upon these attributes has limited the development of technologies that would optimise the quality of live redclaw or provide alternative non-live products. The existing industry is heavily reliant on live sales, which have been negatively affected by poor survival during and after transport.

Despite their perceived physical toughness redclaw, like all intensively managed livestock, suffer from stress imposed by harvesting, grading, packaging and transportation. High levels of mortality are frequently reported, particularly for the several days immediately after they reach their destination. There is a range of possible causes of mortality during and after live transport and further research is required to clarify them. It is clear however, that many of the procedures employed by farmers in arranging live transport are inconsistent and/or inappropriate. There is no fixed recipe for success, but by following the guidelines set out in this manual, producers should minimise mortality of live product and give further consideration to marketing frozen, chilled and cooked/chilled products.

It is important that producers, wholesalers and buyers of live redclaw acknowledge that specialised handling techniques are necessary and that a range of alternative products for processed redclaw may have equal or better market opportunity.

Harvesting has been included in these recommended procedures because it has such important bearing on subsequent product quality. Sections which follow include holding stock, grading and purging, treatment of unattractive product, flavour enhancement, transport methods for live redclaw and processing of killed redclaw.