

Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome

Port River

Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS), caused by ostreid herpesvirus-1 virus microvariant (OsHV-1) infection was first detected in feral Pacific oyster populations in the Port Adelaide River (Port River) on 28 February 2018. To reduce the risk of POMS spreading outside of the Port River, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) implemented a long-term ban on the removal of all bivalve organisms (including oysters, mussels, cockles and razorfish) from the Port River system. PIRSA has also increased its communication and awareness campaign, particularly with regard to appropriate vessel cleaning and biofouling management.

Feral oyster monitoring and management

Feral oyster populations within, and adjacent to, growing regions pose a potential disease risk. The oyster industry has previously undertaken Pacific oyster knockdown events. Contact your South Australian Oyster Growers Association (SAOGA) Zone Representative for more details on organised knockdown events in your area.

If mortalities in feral oyster populations in growing regions are observed, they should be immediately reported to PIRSA on the 24-hour Fishwatch hotline - 1800 065 522 - or via the contact details below. If you come in contact with feral oysters suspected to be affected by disease, do not visit a commercial oyster farm on the same day. Follow decontamination protocols outlined at pir.sa.gov.au/poms.

Early detection of POMS

Early detection of POMS when OsHV-1 viral cells may be present but not causing oyster mortalities (generally between 16-20°C) could reduce the impact to industry, by allowing for a more rapid response, faster containment, limited spread, and/or emergency harvest. POMS early detection surveillance in spring and autumn has been occurring since 2017. To date, POMS has not been detected in commercial oyster growing areas. PIRSA would like to thank oyster growers and SAOGA zone representatives for their ongoing support, coordination and collection of oyster samples.

Industry should remain vigilant and report unusually high mortalities to PIRSA and SAOGA. PIRSA will continue to rapidly respond to mortality events to rule out the POMS virus and other infectious disease.

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High or unexplained mortalities

In accordance with the *Aquaculture Regulations 2016*, if the mortality rate of Pacific oysters is unusually high and the licensee knows, or should reasonably know, that animals are affected with a disease, it must be reported to PIRSA. If you are unsure, guidelines to help determine an unusually high mortality are:

- spat: 40% mortality at first grading or within four weeks, or
- spat >2mm: report >20% mortality at first grading, or
- other oysters: report >10% mortality at grading.

These guidelines are from PIRSA's Disease Response Plan (Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome).

Oyster growers who need to report a mortality event should:

- **Notify**
 - Contact PIRSA immediately via the 24-hour Fishwatch hotline - 1800 065 522
 - Your zone representative.
- **Determine the extent of the mortality**
 - Determine the percentage of oysters that have died.
- **Collect samples**
 - Collect at least 40 live oysters from the mortality site (e.g. from the same baskets).
 - If possible, collect 40 live oysters from another site where there are no mortalities (e.g. at the grader). Keep these oysters separate from those collected at the mortality site.
 - Place samples in a labelled bag in a polystyrene box.
 - Send samples (indirectly on ice) via courier to the laboratory (within 24 hours).
 - PIRSA will cover costs associated with couriers and laboratory testing with the aim to rule out POMS or other infectious disease.