



Environment
Agency

using the right trap



A guide to crayfish trapping

We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it a better place – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place.

Published by:

Environment Agency
Rio House
Waterside Drive, Aztec West
Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4UD
Tel: 08708 506 506
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

© Environment Agency

All rights reserved. This document may be reproduced with prior permission of the Environment Agency.

GEHO0310BRVF-E-E February 2010

Summary



If you want to trap crayfish, it is vital that you are careful and follow the rules. Otherwise you may find yourself breaking the law.

The main points:

- Native crayfish are a protected species. They are now only found in a few parts of England and Wales. You can't trap them to eat or sell.
- You can trap non-native crayfish – but *only* if you have written consent from the Environment Agency and you use the trap identity tags that we will send you.
- You also need permission from the landowner.
- You need to make sure that your traps are the right size. If they're not, they can harm other wildlife such as otters and water voles. We refuse applications that risk harming these creatures.
- You have to tell the Environment Agency about the crayfish you trap – on a catch return form.
- Non-native signal crayfish carry crayfish plague. This is killing off our native species. If you've been trapping signal crayfish or fishing in infected waters, you

must disinfect your equipment thoroughly before you use it elsewhere.

- In some areas you also need a special licence to keep crayfish alive after trapping. See section 9 for details.

You will find most of the information you need in this pack:

1. How to apply for a consent to trap non-native crayfish.
2. Key information needed for your application.
3. Filling in the catch return form.
4. Identifying types of crayfish.
5. Protect water voles.
6. Protect otters.
7. Suppliers of crayfish traps.
8. Stop the spread of crayfish plague.
9. Further information.
10. Who to contact.

For further general information, call the **Fish Movements Team on 01480 483968**.

For local information, phone **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506** and ask to speak to your local Fisheries Officer.

1 How to apply for a consent to trap non-native crayfish

Application form

The application form asks for some specific information about:

- yourself;
- where you are trapping;
- dates for trapping;
- the reason for trapping;
- the species you are planning to trap;
- the type and number of traps you will be using.

This information allows us to assess whether you can trap crayfish without harming the local water environment. Trapping can sometimes harm native species or threaten creatures such as water voles and otters.

If this sounds like a lot of form filling, don't worry. There is a guide to help you. We set out the key information you need in section 2.

You can apply for consent in several ways – online, by fax or post, or by emailing us a scanned copy of your completed application.

Online

Go to www.efishbusiness.co.uk and register for econsenting. You can then:

- apply for consents;
- track the status of an application;
- view old applications;

By post, fax or email

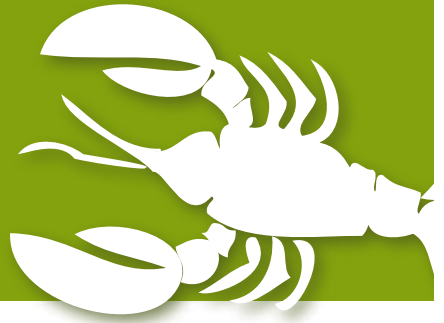
Download a form from www.efishbusiness.co.uk/formsandguides. You can also ask for a form by calling the **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506**.

Send completed forms to the Fish Movements Team:

By post: Fish Movements Team
Environment Agency
Bromholme Lane
Brampton
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE28 4NE

By fax: 01480 483955 or
01480 483026

By email: fmapplications@environment-agency.gov.uk



What you will receive

Your local Fisheries Officer will decide whether to approve your application. If your application is approved, you will receive:

1. Written consent from the Environment Agency. This authorises both your trapping and the traps you are going to use.
2. Plastic, credit card sized identity tags for the number of traps you applied for. Make sure these are attached to your traps at all times.
3. A catch return form. Complete this when your consent expires and send it to the Fish Movements Team at the address above.

2 Key information needed for your application

Personal details

As the applicant you will need to give your name and contact details.

Who owns the water where you plan to trap?

You must make sure that you have the owner's permission before you trap. Consent from us does not give you permission to go onto someone's land.

Will you be using a contractor?

If you are going to use a contractor to trap the crayfish we will need their details too.

About the water

We will need to know exactly where you will be trapping crayfish. If you can, please give us the national grid reference. If you are trapping along a river, give the upstream and downstream points.

Finding the national grid reference: you can get this from the Ordnance Survey at www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite

Once on their site, simply enter the postcode or place name into search bar under 'view maps online'. A map will appear of the area you want. Underneath the map you will find the grid reference in the following format: TL 123 456.

If you can't find the national grid reference, you can attach a map. This should be clearly annotated to show the location of the water where you want to trap crayfish.

About the task you want to carry out

You must tell us when you plan to trap crayfish. This could be anything from one day up to a 12-month period.

Using a trap: You need to tell us how many traps you are planning to use and confirm that they comply with the crayfish byelaws. It's sensible to get permission from the Environment Agency *before* you buy your trap. See section 6 for more information.

You will need to say why you are planning to trap crayfish. Is it to eat yourself or to sell? Or are you doing a scientific survey?



Survey or removal?

If you are doing a survey on native crayfish they must be returned to the water where they came from.

Remember that non-native crayfish must never be returned to the water.

If you're not sure which type of crayfish lives in your area, please call us. Phone **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506** and ask to speak to your local Fisheries Officer.

You don't need to give any further details at this stage.



3 Filling in the catch return form

If your local fisheries officer approves your application, you will receive:

- tags to attach to your trap;
- a written consent letter setting out where and when you can trap;
- a catch return form.

On the catch return form you must keep a record of the exact numbers of crayfish that you catch and where you caught them. At the end of the period covered by your consent, post the form back to the Fish Movements Team at the address as follows:

Fish Movements Team
Environment Agency
Bromholme Lane
Brampton
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE28 4NE

4 Identifying types of crayfish

There are six non-native species of crayfish in England and Wales. The most common species – and the one that causes the biggest problem – is the signal crayfish.

The signal crayfish was introduced from North America in the 1970s and sold to farmers looking to diversify into new markets. Crayfish escaped from these farms and established populations in our rivers and lakes. In addition, many new populations have been established due to translocations.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act it is illegal to introduce non-native species without permission of Natural England. All non-native crayfish caught must be humanely destroyed.

All North American species are capable of carrying crayfish plague to which European crayfish are highly susceptible.

This section explains how to tell the different species apart.

Photos and identification text provided by David Holdich.

Native (European)

White-clawed crayfish

Length: Adults usually less than 10 cm (excluding claws) but can be up to 12 cm.

Body: Usually brown or olive brown in colour. Smooth but pitted. Two pairs of ridges behind eye sockets; however, second pair may or may not be visible. Has row of sharp spines behind sides of cervical groove. Rostrum (extending point on top of head) triangular with very short apex.

Claws: Top side rough, underside dirty white to pink.

Habits/habitats: Relatively docile. Lives in streams, rivers, canals, reservoirs, water-filled quarries. Capable of burrowing.

Distribution: Found central/northern England and eastern Wales.





Non-native (North American)

Signal crayfish

Length: Adults usually about 15 cm, but can be up to 30 cm.

Body: Generally bluish-brown to reddish brown. Smooth all over. Two pairs of ridges behind eye sockets. Spines absent from behind cervical groove. Rostrum well developed with parallel sides and with long apex.

Claws: Smooth on both sides, underside bright red in colour.

Habits/habitats: Aggressive. Invasive. Lives in streams, rivers, canals, reservoirs, water-filled gravel pits. Burrows extensively.

Distribution: Found across England, especially in the south, and Wales (also present in Scotland).



Non-native (Eastern Europe)

Turkish, narrow-clawed crayfish

Length: Usually 15 cm, can be up to 30 cm.

Body: Pale yellow to pale green in colour. Sides of carapace very rough. Two pairs of ridges behind eye sockets. Rostrum well developed with parallel sides and long apex.

Claws: Long and narrow, upper surface rough, underside same colour as body.

Habits/habitats: Relatively docile. Invasive. Prefers still waters as in lakes and canals, occasionally found in rivers.

Distribution: Mainly found in south-east England and the Midlands.



Non-native (European)

Noble crayfish

Length: Adults up to 15 cm.

Body: Generally brown. Smooth. Has row of spines on carapace behind sides of cervical groove. Two pairs of ridges behind eye sockets. Rostrum well developed with parallel sides and long, saw-toothed apex.

Claws: Top side is rough. Underside is dull red.

Habits/habitats: Relatively docile. Lives in streams, rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Capable of burrowing.

Distribution: Reservoir and streams in south-western England.

Non-native (North American)

Red swamp crayfish

Length: Adults usually 10 cm, can be up to 15 cm.

Body: Generally red to reddish brown all over. Many colour varieties. Carapace rough. One pair of ridges behind eye sockets. Rostrum triangular with relatively short apex.

Claws: Red all over with spiny top surface.

Habits/habitats: Aggressive. Invasive. Prefers still waters such as lakes and canals, but can live in all sorts of waters. Capable of burrowing.

Distribution: A number of sites in southern England.





Non-native (North American)

Spiny-cheeked crayfish

Length: Adults 12 cm or larger.

Body: Pale brown (can be black in silty lakes) with brown stripes across top of tail. Prominent spines on sides in front of cervical groove. Single pair of ridges behind eye sockets. Rostrum well developed with parallel sides and long apex.

Claws: Pitted and smooth to touch.

Habits/habitats: Relatively aggressive. Invasive. Lives in rivers, lakes and water-filled gravel pits. Capable of burrowing.

Distribution: Two locations in the Midlands and one in eastern England.



Non-native (North American)

Virile crayfish

Length: Adults 12 cm or larger.

Body: Brown. Single pair of ridges behind eye sockets. Rostrum short and broad.

Claws: Broad and flattened, bordered by pale-coloured tubercles, underside pale.

Habits/habitats: Relatively aggressive. Invasive. Lives in canals, rivers and lakes.

Distribution: River Lee catchment in North London.



Water voles are on the increase so there are even more reasons to trap responsibly.



Photo provided by Andrew Parkinson.

5 Protect water voles

If there are water voles nearby, we may refuse your application to trap crayfish. This is because trapping can put these protected animals in danger.

You are breaking the law if you:

- use illegal traps;
- recklessly allow water voles to drown in crayfish traps;
- place traps in the entrances to water vole tunnels.

There are strict rules for the design and size of crayfish traps. See section 6 for more information.

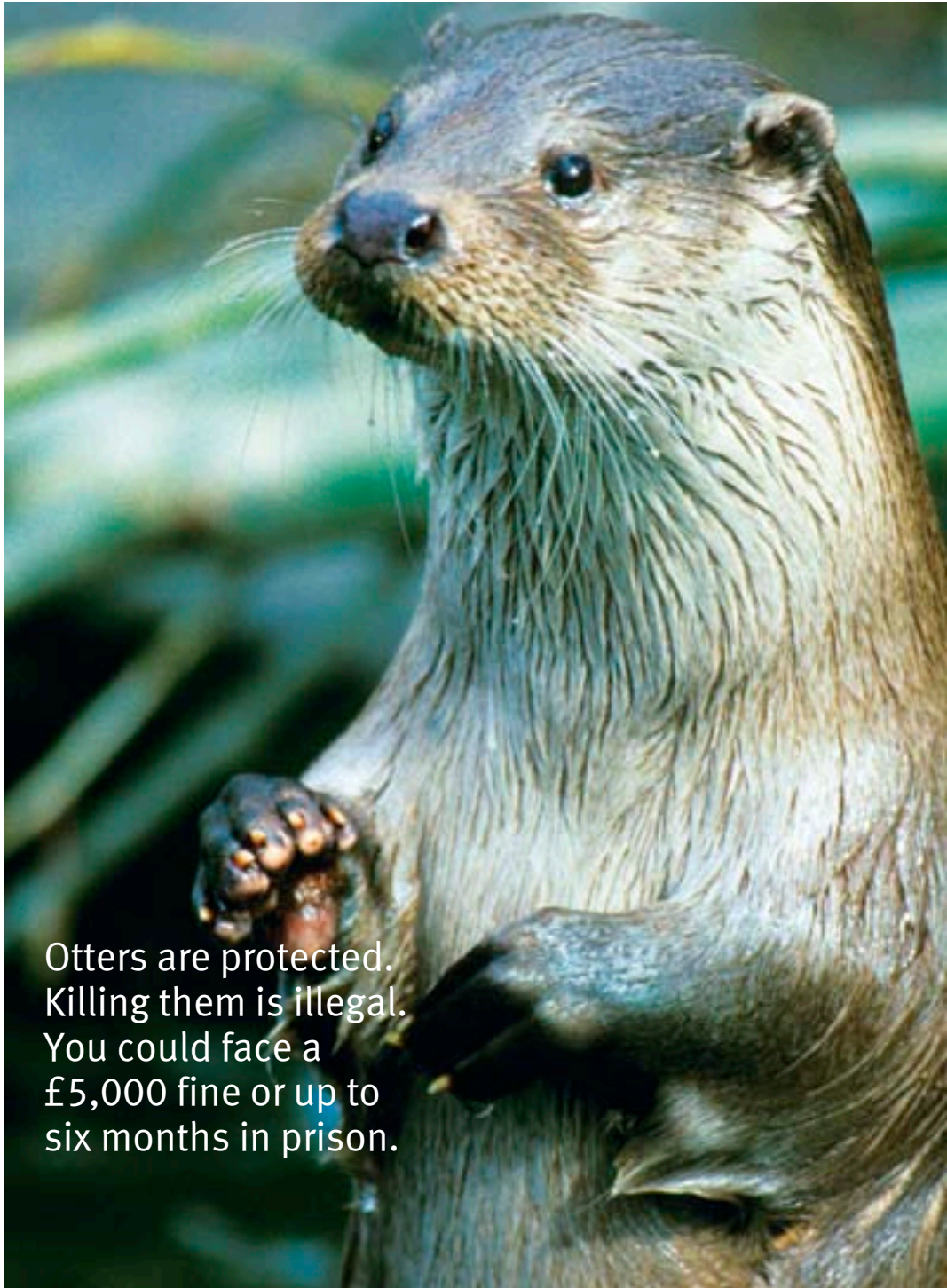
Sites with lots of water voles are unlikely to have many crayfish – they prefer different habitats. But if there are water voles where you want to trap, we may ask you to use baited drop nets. These are open traps which are safe for water voles, unlike the more traditional, funnelled, closed traps.

Remember:

- Do not put traps near water vole burrows. Your local Fisheries Officer can tell you what these burrows look like.
- You must not block a water vole burrow with a crayfish trap.
- If it is safe to do so, position your traps away from the banks. Traps in the middle of a stream or watercourse are less likely to catch voles.
- If you do accidentally catch a water vole, stop trapping immediately and let your local Fisheries Officer know.
- You can modify your trap by cutting escape holes into the roof. Holes that are 6–8 cm across will be sufficient.

For general advice call the **Fish Movements Team on 01480 483968**.

For local advice, please phone **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506** and ask to speak to your local Fisheries Officer.



Otters are protected.
Killing them is illegal.
You could face a
£5,000 fine or up to
six months in prison.

6 Protect otters

As you need our written consent to use a crayfish trap, it's sensible to get permission from the Environment Agency *before* you buy.

Make sure that the trap you buy is legal for crayfish trapping. There are strict rules about the size and design. This is to protect other wildlife such as otters:

- The entrance to the trap must be no more than 9.5 cm across.
- If the entrance is more than 9.5 cm across, there must be an otter guard or restriction on the funnel leading into the trap.
- The holes in the mesh must not be more than 3 cm across.
- The trap itself must not be more than 60 cm long or 35 cm wide.

Below are three ways to make an otter guard to ensure the entrance to your trap is legal:

1. One made from tightly stretched flexible netting. When wet, the mesh size must not be more than 7.5 cm from knot to knot. Each hole must not be more than 30 cm around the edge.
2. A rigid square grille with bars that are no more than 8.5 cm apart.
3. A rigid ring guard fitted to the funnel leading into the entrance of the trap. The distance across the inside must not be more than 9.5 cm.

This is an illegal trap

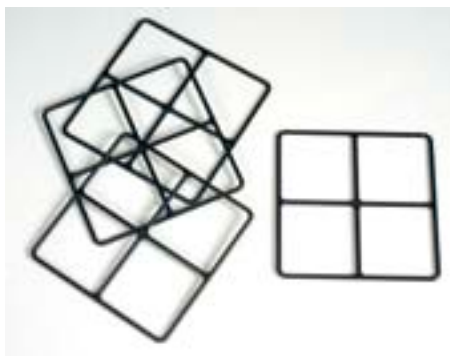




If you want to use a trap that does not comply with these rules, you will need written permission from the Environment Agency. Phone **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506** and ask to speak to your local Fisheries Officer.

We refuse many applications because of the risks to otters and water voles. These are protected species. Don't break the law.

Please note: The owners of fish farms, and their employees, do not need our written consent to use crayfish traps on their fish farms. However all traps have to comply with these rules.



7 Suppliers of crayfish traps

We have listed some suppliers, for information only. We are not recommending the persons and companies listed, or their products and services. There are many other suppliers.

www.solwayfeeders.com

www.alanaecology.com

www.sharnbrooktackle.com

www.trapman.co.uk

www.fishkit.co.uk

www.framlinghamfisheries.co.uk

www.albionmanufacturing.com

www.crayfishremovaloxon.co.uk

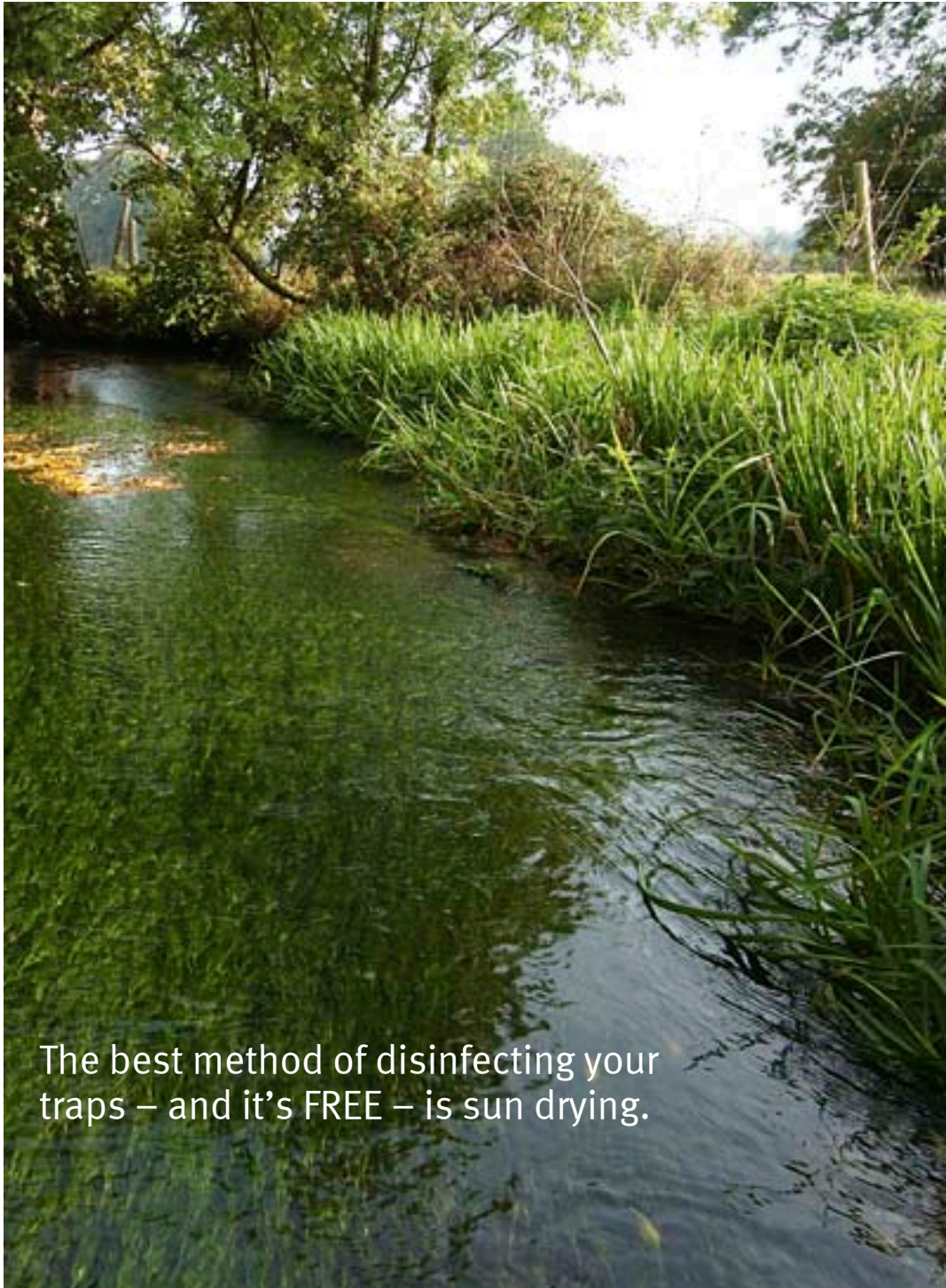
www.coastalnets.co.uk

www.collinsnets.co.uk

paulnewmansfm@aol.com

Moore and Moore Carp

01189 882844



The best method of disinfecting your traps – and it's FREE – is sun drying.

8 Stop the spread of crayfish plague

Disinfect your traps

The greatest threat to our native white-clawed crayfish comes from a fungal disease called crayfish plague. This is carried by the non-native signal crayfish that now dominate many English and Welsh waters.

If you are trapping signal crayfish or have been fishing in infected waters, be very careful. Clean and disinfect your equipment properly. It is very easy to spread this disease.

General advice

You only need to disinfect traps and other fishing equipment if you're going to use them somewhere else. If you always use them in the same water there is no risk of spreading crayfish plague.

Disinfection methods

There are a number of ways of disinfecting traps. But the first step is always to remove *all* mud and plant matter.

Sun drying

Dry your equipment thoroughly in sunlight. This is the safest and most effective method. Make sure that you air all the surfaces of the trap and that the trap is completely dry.

Chemical disinfection – iodophors

You can buy iodophors from agricultural suppliers as udder wash. Make sure you dilute the mixture in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. Either immerse the traps in the solution or spray on. Leave for at least 15 minutes before rinsing with plenty of water. Your equipment is now ready for re-use.

Important: Dispose of chemicals responsibly! Don't let the waste chemicals enter surface water drains. Also, iodophors go off rapidly in sunlight: store them in a dark place. Iodophors should be dark brown. Once it loses this colour, it will no longer work properly and you need to replace it.



Virkon Aquatic

Produced by DuPont. This versatile disinfectant is effective against many viruses and bacteria. It also kills off fungal spores such as crayfish plague. Make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions. You will normally need to use a 1 per cent solution for 10 minutes, but different products may vary. Always check. Although the product is biodegradable, you must still rinse the traps thoroughly before re-use. Virkon Aquatic is available from agricultural suppliers. You can also buy it in soluble tablet form at aquarium retail outlets.

If you use a chemical disinfectant, you must make sure that you:

- follow the instructions for use;
- comply with all the manufacturer's health and safety advice;
- dispose of waste chemicals responsibly – follow the manufacturer's instructions.

For further advice on disposal of waste disinfectant, please contact your local **Environment Agency Environment Management Team on 08708 506 506.**

Crayfish plague is easy to spread and deadly, it can wipe out native populations in weeks so ensure you disinfect your traps.

9 Further information

In recent years, more people have become interested in catching crayfish to eat. Most trap from late spring to early autumn and often have just one trap. The commercial market for selling crayfish in the UK is very small.

You can't catch native crayfish to eat or sell.

Nearly everyone will need written consent to trap crayfish.

What is the problem with trapping non-native crayfish?

Often traps catch the larger crayfish, leaving the smaller ones to breed prolifically. This can result in a population explosion.

Our native crayfish is under threat from an aggressive non-native species that carries a fungal disease called crayfish plague. This disease does not harm humans but is often deadly to our native crayfish. If you don't disinfect your equipment properly, you can easily spread crayfish plague. Always disinfect your equipment before you move to another site.

You mustn't use crayfish as fishing bait for the same reason. Spores of the plague can survive for up to two weeks – even in temperatures below freezing.

Can't I help to get rid of the non-native species?

This may sound like a good idea, but in practice this is virtually impossible to achieve. You would need to continue trapping for long periods to reduce numbers significantly.

What else do I need to think about?

You must kill the trapped crayfish in a safe and humane way.

Sometimes several people will want to trap in the same place. Be considerate.

Is it ever OK to trap native crayfish?

They can only be trapped for scientific purposes and you would need a licence from Natural England or the Countryside Council for Wales. Please speak to your local Fisheries Officer before you go ahead.



Can I keep non-native crayfish alive?

Some people like to keep crayfish alive for a few days before eating them.

For holding signal crayfish alive in those areas where signal crayfish are widespread and well established you are covered by general 'licence to keep'. If you trap in one of these areas, you do not need additional permission to keep the trapped crayfish alive.

Outside these areas you will need a special 'Licence to keep non-native crayfish'. These licences are issued by Defra (the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

You will need to check whether you require this special licence. Please phone **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506** and ask to speak to your local Fisheries Officer. It will help if you know the nearest town to the water where you wish to trap.

If you do need a special licence, this may well be an area where we are unlikely to approve an application to trap in any case.

The general advice is to kill the crayfish humanely on capture. Be careful not to spread crayfish plague.

10 Who to contact

For further general advice, call our Fish Movements Team:

Post: Environment Agency
Bromholme Lane
Brampton
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE28 4NE

Phone: 01480 483968

Fax: 01480 483955
or 01480 483026

Email: fmapplications@environment-agency.gov.uk

Fish-farm owners should contact us directly.

For specific advice on your area, or on your completed application form, please phone **Environment Agency Customer Services on 08708 506 506** and ask to speak to your local Fisheries Officer. They will also be able to tell you whether we issue consents in your area.

We can also provide a technical leaflet on species identification and a full description of the relevant byelaws. **Please call 08708 506 506.**

International Year of Biodiversity 2010

You are an integral part of nature; your fate is tightly linked with biodiversity, the huge variety of other animals and plants, the places they live and their surrounding environments, all over the world.

You rely on this diversity of life to provide you with the food, fuel, medicine and other essentials you simply cannot live without. Yet this rich diversity is being lost at a greatly accelerated rate because of human activities. This impoverishes us all and weakens the ability of the living systems, on which we depend, to resist growing threats such as climate change.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, and people all over the world are working to safeguard this irreplaceable natural wealth and reduce biodiversity loss. This is vital for current and future human wellbeing. We need to do more. Now is the time to act.



Otters and water voles
are protected species.



**Would you like to find out more about us,
or about your environment?**

Then call us on

08708 506 506 (Mon–Fri 8–6)

email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

or visit our website

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)

floodline 0845 988 1188

*Approximate call costs: 8p plus 6p per minute (standard landline).
Please note charges will vary across telephone providers.



Environment first: This publication is printed on paper made from 100 per cent previously used waste. By-products from making the pulp and paper are used for composting and fertiliser, for making cement and for generating energy.