



MANAGING *BONAMIA OSTREAE* – a flat oyster parasite

BACKGROUND

The parasite *Bonamia ostreae* was detected for the first time in New Zealand in early 2015. Overseas, infection with this parasite has been lethal for some flat oyster species.

To date, *Bonamia ostreae* is present in the Marlborough Sounds and Nelson at the top of the South Island, and in two flat oyster farms on Stewart Island. It is not known how it entered New Zealand.

It is not yet known how *Bonamia ostreae* would affect New Zealand's flat oyster (the Bluff or dredge oyster – *Tiostrea chilensis*) but it is thought that it would be similar to infection with *Bonamia exitiosa* – a closely related parasite that has been in New Zealand since the 1960s and which has impacted the Bluff oyster fishery in Southland.

Other bivalves, in particular Pacific oysters, green-lipped (Greenshell) mussels and geoduck are not susceptible to disease caused by *Bonamia ostreae*, but they may be able to carry the parasite and transmit it to flat oysters.

There is no human health impact from consuming oysters that may contain the parasite. The discovery of *Bonamia ostreae* in New Zealand does not raise any food safety concern. MPI's advice, to consumers here and internationally, is that fresh, good quality New Zealand oysters are safe to eat.

LOOKING OUT FOR *BONAMIA OSTREAE*

Bonamia ostreae is very difficult to recognise in wild or farmed oysters. Typically the only sign of infection is the occurrence of mass oyster deaths. In general, signs of disease caused by this parasite, which can go undetected, are:

- » poor condition;
- » gills appear eroded;
- » yellow discolouration of the gills and mantle.

Farmers and harvesters observing these signs in flat oysters, or a mass mortality event, should report the situation immediately to MPI on the 24/7 Pests and Diseases Hotline: **0800 80 99 66**.

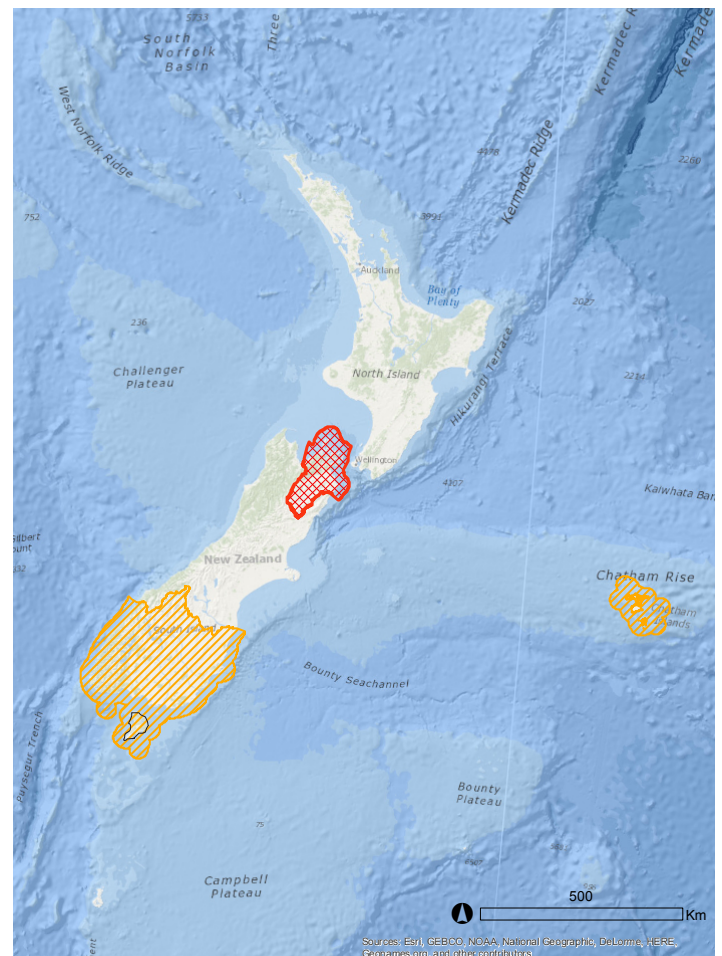
PROTECTING NEW ZEALAND'S FLAT OYSTERS WITH MOVEMENT CONTROLS ON SHELLFISH STOCK

MPI has introduced measures to protect the wild flat oysters in Foveaux Strait, Otago and in the Chatham Islands from the introduction of *Bonamia ostreae*.

A Controlled Area Notice has been issued that legally restricts the movement of some shellfish species including their spat from the higher risk area of Marlborough/Nelson and Stewart Island to Foveaux Strait, Otago and the Chathams. It also legally restricts movements of farm equipment and vessels out of Stewart Island.

The notice also sets out a Contained Zone that takes in the region of Marlborough and the area within the boundaries of Nelson City and extends out to 12 nautical miles offshore. It sets out additional movement controls for Stewart Island out to 1 nautical mile offshore (designated the Stewart Island Zone).

It also creates a Protected Zone that takes in two areas – the Southland/Otago regions and the Chatham Islands and out to 12 nautical miles from their coasts.



THE CONTROLS

Land-based aquaculture facilities and marine farms within the Contained Area (Marlborough/Nelson/Stewart Island) are subject to the controls outlined in the Notice. Marine farms and aquaculture facilities elsewhere in New Zealand may require permits to carry out some activities. The most stringent controls are on the movement of flat oysters.

The controls apply to the movement of certain bivalve species and spat to the waters of different regions.

Stewart Island also has controls to restrict movements of farming equipment and vessels.

Shellfish from the Contained Zone (for human consumption):

- » Flat oysters (adults and spat, either farmed or fished) from within the Contained Zone are **not allowed to be transferred** anywhere else in New Zealand, unless they are fully processed for consumption.
- » Flat oysters from the Contained Zone can only be transferred **within** the Contained Zone. Flat oysters within the Stewart Island Zone can only be moved within this zone if laboratory testing confirms they are free of *Bonamia ostreae* and a permit is obtained from MPI, or they are fully processed for consumption and MPI is notified of the movement in writing.
- » Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck (adults and spat) from the Contained Zone **can only be transferred to the Protected Zone with a permit from MPI**.
- » Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck **require a permit from MPI**, if they have not been fully processed for human consumption prior to leaving the Contained Zone or entering the Protected Zone.
- » Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck can be freely transferred within the Contained Zone, but not within the Stewart Island Zone, unless a permit is obtained from MPI, or they are fully processed for consumption and MPI is notified of the movement in writing.

Movement of shellfish from areas of New Zealand outside of the Controlled Areas (not for human consumption):

- » Flat oysters from areas of New Zealand outside of the Contained Zone cannot be transferred to the Protected Zone unless they have

been fully processed for human consumption prior to arriving in the Protected Zone.

- » Flat oysters from the Protected Zone can be freely transferred to all other parts of New Zealand, but not out of the Stewart Island Zone, unless a permit is obtained from MPI, or they are fully processed for consumption and MPI is notified of the movement in writing.
- » Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck can only be moved into the Protected Zone under permit from MPI (as below). Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck can be freely moved to other areas of New Zealand outside of the Protected Zone.

Shellfish from the Protected Zones (not for processing):

- » Flat oysters, Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck (adults and spat) can be freely moved within Zones and anywhere else in New Zealand, except Stewart Island.

OBTAINING PERMITS TO MOVE STOCK

Permits are required to move Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck from inside the Contained Zone to anywhere else in New Zealand. They are also required to move the same species from anywhere in New Zealand into the Protected Zone. Permits contain strict conditions relating to the equipment used to move Pacific oysters, green-lipped mussels and geoduck and how they are moved.

Permits for these stock transfers can be obtained through the MPI website (as below), and are free of charge.

The permitting process is designed to be simple to use and provide a fast turnaround.

Full information about *Bonamia ostreae*, the Controlled Area Notice and permitting is at: www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/bonamia, and by contacting: bonamiapermit@mpi.govt.nz